

A SEMINAR FOR EQUIPPING SITE PASTORS IN MULTI-SITE  
CONGREGATIONS TO PREACH LIVE MESSAGES THAT ARE CONSISTENT  
WITH THE BIBLICAL TEXT, CONGRUENT WITH ONE ANOTHER AND  
CONTEXTUALIZED FOR THE LOCAL VENUE

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Dedicated to the three most beautiful people in the world:

Josephine Dawn

Jaden Dominica

Joiada Danya

You are truly my heart.



They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense,  
so that the people understood the reading.

-Nehemiah 8:8 (ESV)



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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this Doctor of Ministry project is to equip teaching pastors in multi-site congregations to preach live messages at each individual site that are consistent with the Biblical text, congruent with one another and contextualized for the local venue. The final product is a seminar that can be used by ministry leaders who wish to investigate a multi-site ministry strategy, develop or evaluate potential site pastors within this model, or simply improve the effectiveness of a teaching team.



## CHAPTER ONE

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Although virtually unheard of in 1999, multi-site church has been described by some as the “new normal”<sup>1</sup> among North American churches. By 2009, sixty-seven of the one hundred largest churches in America were worshipping at multiple campuses and fifty-eight of the one hundred fastest growing churches were considered multi-site.<sup>2</sup> Many of the 2,000 multi-site churches in America are small or average sized congregations. A recent survey of churches with over 200 attendees indicated that one-third of these churches are already operating with more than one site, one-third are planning to become multi-site and one-third is at least thinking about expanding to multiple campuses.<sup>3</sup>

#### **The Opportunities and Challenges of Multi-Site Ministry**

Many of these sites have experienced enormous growth; especially those ministries that elect to use video to transmit live or prerecorded messages to the extension sites. Technology has enabled churches to overcome the barriers of time and space. Churches can produce and transmit messages to any part of the globe almost instantly and yet inexpensively. Because of these factors, at least one-third of multi-site churches are attempting to develop campuses without live, on-site preachers. Multi-site experts report that 32% of multisite churches do not have a weekly, on-site person teacher preaching,

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> “Outreach Magazine’s 100 Largest and Fastest Growing Churches in America.” *Outreach*, (2009) 34-44.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Tomberlin. “Mega Schmega.” *REV!* (March/April, 2008). <http://www.thirdquarterconsulting.com/images/MegaSchmegaMultiSightings.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2009), 66.



opting to exclusively use a video format. Another 32% of venues only present live, on-site preaching some of the time. This leaves only one-third of these new multi-site churches offering live, on-site teaching.<sup>4</sup> In addition to this, the churches that are most quickly expanding the number of campuses are those that rely almost exclusively on video-delivered preaching. Ministries that fail to entertain this use to video to project the message of the gospel may be missing out on countless opportunities to make disciples and extend ministry by literally never looking beyond the reach of their own auditoriums.

However, in spite of the advantages and growth of the video-based multi-site churches, this movement has been lacking an objective analysis. Many of these churches may be expanding without evaluating the long-term effects of this format on parishioners or the consequences of no longer needing to train local site pastors to preach. In a virtual world, is the pastor just one more image a person has a relationship with, but does not know? Is a church healthier if it can grow to 20,000 members, yet only has one person who has been given the authority or training to preach?

### **The Goal and Focus of the Project**

The goal of this project is to enable churches to expand to new sites, while raising the proficiency of live on-site preaching teams for each venue. It will specifically address the question: *“How can multiple on-site teaching pastors in multi-site congregations prepare messages that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with each other, and contextualized for their specific site?”*

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<sup>4</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 165.



The focus of this project is not to evaluate the features or effectiveness of the multi-site movement, nor is it a class on exegesis or homiletics. The focus will be to analyze the teaching formats commonly used in these venues with an attempt to prepare live on-site pastors to preach in each local venue.

The objective is to create a seminar that can be taught to teaching teams from churches that would like to begin or improve the preparation of messages as a team that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with each other, and contextualized for their specific site.

### **The Need of the Project**

The first reason for this project is the potential for the expansion of the kingdom that has been afforded to the church by innovation and globalization. Churches can use technology to reproduce messages quickly, bringing any ministry to any part of the globe instantly. No longer are people denied access to a church or an effective bible teacher simply because they live out of commuting distance to the church. Churches have unprecedented opportunities to be able to mobilize quickly and be efficient stewards of their financial and personnel resources by launching satellite and internet campuses, or even unite with under-resourced or struggling congregations. Often, the biggest hindrance they have is the preparation of preachers for these sites. One goal of this project is to equip the lead pastor to mentor the site pastor(s) in developing weekly sermons while making sure that the message at each venue is congruent among the various campuses.



The second reason that this project is needed is because there has been very little evaluation of the multi-site movement, especially the video venue format, from a gracious and objective biblical perspective. Proponents of this video movement usually indicate that Christ has called believers to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20) and creating additional video campuses is a way to fulfill that mandate. However, it is possible that this format may be ignoring or even violating biblical instruction as well. For example, Paul commands the local elder to preach, and be able to preach, and be prepared to preach (2 Timothy 4:2). Yet one of the reasons many multi-site churches can mobilize so quickly is because the local elders, called “site pastors” often don’t need to be able to preach. They just need to be able to gather teams, handle administration and press “play” on the projection unit when it comes time for the sermon. Some multi-site senior pastors actually discourage hiring site pastors who possess a desire to preach or theological training.<sup>5</sup>

A third reason for this project is that churches are much better equipped to prepare sites, than they are at equipping people to preach. Churches often find it much easier to assemble teams, do market studies, and designate resources than to identify and train preachers on a consistent basis. This project will be designed to help the senior or lead pastor to prepare preachers as well as sermons, for each site pastor will be spending hours each week doing exegesis and application within a cohort of people who will be depending upon him.

The final reason for this project is that Phillips Temple has been entertaining and experimenting with the multi-site concept for almost ten years. Phillips Temple is a

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<sup>5</sup> This comment was made by one of the pastors interviewed as part of Chapter 3. The author has chosen to leave this comment anonymous due to its nature and content.



large, evangelical church in Dayton, Ohio that is committed to expository preaching. In 2005, Phillips Temple intended to be a multi-site church by building a new facility in suburban Trotwood while continuing to also hold services at its west Dayton location. However, the facilities and ministry growth at the new campus created little interest among members to continue to hold services at the original location. Since then, Phillips has grown to capacity and in 2008, created a Saturday evening service with a different preacher and different message. It is the purpose of this project to bring closer alignment between the messages of the preaching pastors at the Saturday evening and Sunday morning venues. Currently, Phillips Temple is also exploring the possibility of adopting a struggling campus in the greater Cincinnati area. This new campus would operate as an extension of Phillips Temple, and its success would be dependent upon how effectively the new site pastor can be trained.

It is the goal of the researcher to find ways to use the ingenuity and momentum of the multi-site movement to establish local venues where site pastors will be equipped to preach

## **An Overview of the Project**

### **The Sources of the Project**

In addition to surveying the literature written by and about those who are proficient in this model of ministry, much attention will be given to interviewing leaders of multi-site churches, especially those that offer teams of live, on-site preachers. The goal is to track patterns and develop ways to prepare teaching teams to prepare exegetical sermons together and then deliver them independently.



The research will include interviews with between 6-10 multi-site churches. Phone interviews will be conducted with pastors (primarily lead, teaching, or site pastors) of well known multi-site churches such as Seacoast Church in Mt. Pleasant, SC and Mosaic Church in the greater Los Angeles area. These churches will be selected because of their innovation and reputation within the multi-site movement. Most of these interviews will be conducted by phone. The research will also include site visit and interviews with multi-site churches in the greater Dayton area, where Phillips Temple is located.

### **The Audience of the Project**

This project will potentially have three audiences. The first audience would be pastors and teachers who would like to compose messages as a team that will be preached by different contributing members in various venues. These may be churches that are embracing the concept of multiple campuses. However, they may also ministries that desire to teach a consistent message beyond the sanctuary to other venues. These venues may include on-site children, youth or college ministries, or off-site venues such as a satellite campus, correctional facility or retirement home.

A second audience could include multi-site churches that have hired site pastors with little or no theological training. An intensive seminar will be developed to teach these pastors how to do prepare and preach biblical sermons as a team.

A final audience would be seminary trained pastors who are being considered for the position of site pastors in multi-site congregations. These candidates may have the opportunity to attend the seminar, be part of the sermon composition team and then be



evaluated by the current staff to see if the candidate would be a good fit as a teacher pastor at one of the sites.

A manual will be developed to be used in the facilitation of this seminar. This seminar will first be taught at Philips Temple for the teaching team that will include the senior pastor that preaches on Sunday mornings, the teaching pastor of the Saturday evening service and the pastor that is being considered for the potential Cincinnati campus.

### **The Contents of the Project**

This project will include the teaching manual used for the seminar. The seminar and manual will be divided into the following teaching units:

1. **The Present Reality:** The realities, opportunities and dangers of multi-site ministries.
2. **The Right Idea:** Preparing exegetical outlines as a team that are consistent with the Big Idea of the passage
3. **The Consistent Idea:** Preparing truth outlines as a team that are congruent with one another and with the beliefs and values of the church.
4. **The Relevant Idea:** Contextualizing the group message for each individual venue.



## CHAPTER TWO

### A THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY

As indicated in Chapter 1, the opportunities of multi-site ministry seem nearly limitless. However, before examining the practices of multi-site advocates and ministries in Chapter 3, it seemed prudent to look at what the traditional view of church has been throughout history. Chapter 2 will serve as a baseline of how the church has traditionally thought about church.

Chapter 2 will attempt to answer four primary questions from scripture<sup>6</sup> and evangelical orthodoxy: 1.) What is Church? 2.) What is a local church? 3.) What are the theological patterns of church leadership? 4.) What is the role of a pastor vis-à-vis preaching within the local congregation?

#### What is Church?

Many have a hard time grasping the meaning of *multi-site church*. Sadly, the confusion often does not stem from being unaware of what it means to “be multi-site” as much as it comes from a lack of understanding of what does it mean to be a church. Therefore, a local congregation must understand the marks of a church before embracing the marketability of multi-site ministry.

*Church* can refer to the gathering of God’s people locally or the identification of God’s people globally. *Church* is translated from the Greek word *ekklēsia*,<sup>a</sup> that occurs

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<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise noted, scripture references will be cited from the New International Version. Where space permits, the text of the verse(s) cited will be referenced in the footnotes.



in the Greek New Testament<sup>7</sup> 111 times. Evkklhsi,a, can mean *church, congregation; assembly, or a gathering of religious, political, or unofficial groups*.<sup>8</sup>

Millard Erickson notes that in Classical Greek, evkklhsi,a is found as early as Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato and Euripides, all of whom used evkklhsi,a to refer to an assembly of citizens of a polis (city).<sup>9</sup> According to Erickson there are only three exceptions in classical Greek that evkklhsi,a is used for a religious fellowship and in those three cases, it refers to the business meeting, not the union itself.<sup>10</sup> Evkklhsi,a, has a social meaning of a gathering or assembling of persons as seen in Acts 19:32; 39-40.<sup>11</sup> Paul Alexander and Mark Dever state that the word evkklhsi,a in the New Testament refers simply to a “gathering” whether it is the people of God or not.<sup>12</sup>

Evkklhsi,a is used by Christ only twice in scripture. The first usage of evkklhsi,a by Christ occurs as Jesus proclaims to Peter "I will build My church (evkklhsi,a); and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18).<sup>13</sup>

Christ uses evkklhsi,a a second time while instructing His disciples how to deal with an unrepentant brother who refuses to heed the loving rebuke of one individual or a

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<sup>7</sup> *UBS Greek New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1041

<sup>10</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1041.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 19:32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.

Acts 19:39 If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly.

Acts 19:40 As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." 41 After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Alexander and Mark Dever. *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 87. Alexander and Dever believe that in order for a church to be an authentic church all believers must be able to gather at once and offering multiple services and multiple sites are inconsistent with the evkklhsi,a of the New Testament. Since Alexander and Dever question whether multiple services constitute multiple churches, it is reasonable that multiple sites would create multiple churches as well.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.



small group of believers. The disciples are then to tell the dispute to the entire *evkkhlhsi,a*, or assembly (Matthew 18:15-18)<sup>14</sup>

In Acts, the *evkkhlhsi,a* was initially a gathering of believers who identified themselves as followers of Christ. Ladd writes that "The earliest *evkkhlhsi,a* consisted of a free fellowship of Jewish believers who had in no way broken with Judaism, who continued in Jewish religious practices and worship."<sup>15</sup>

Following the martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the church by Saul, the term *evkkhlhsi,a* appears to define a dispersed movement more than just a local assembly. Acts 8:1 notes that "a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem,"<sup>16</sup> In Acts 8:3, Saul "began to destroy the church," which was currently not meeting in one location as he had to go from house to house to drag off these men and women.<sup>17</sup> In Acts 9, the church is recognized as an organization that was not only strengthened by the Holy Spirit, but dispersed throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.<sup>18</sup>

Though *evkkhlhsi,a* originally meant "assembly," Ladd says that Paul identifies the church as being "made up of groups of believers scattered throughout the

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>15</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 388.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 8:1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 8:3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.



Mediterranean world from Antioch to Rome with no external or formal organization binding them together.”<sup>19</sup>

Evkkhlhsi, a not only referred to an assembly of believers alone, but came to designate a group of believers that gather at a certain locale.<sup>20</sup> According to Grudem evkkhlhsi, a (*church*) came to have a universal and a local designation as “the church is the community of all true believers for all time”<sup>21</sup> Yet at the same time Grudem also states that the term *church* may be applied to the gathering of believers at any local level.<sup>22</sup>

## Local and Global

Though Paul referred to the evkkhlhsi, a as a local collection of local believers<sup>23</sup> as did other New Testament writers including the writer of Hebrews, James, and John,<sup>24</sup> Paul<sup>25</sup> and the writer of Hebrews<sup>26</sup> also used evkkhlhsi, a to refer to the universal people of God.

Ladd stresses that evkkhlhsi, a refers equally to both the universal church and each local assembly.

Although the churches were bound tighter by no ecclesiastical ties or formal authority, they had a profound sense of oneness. This can be illustrated by the use of the world *ecclesia* in Acts. The word is often used of local congregations (Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:23), which apparently met in single houses (8:3). The plural is

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<sup>19</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 576.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. See also Acts 11:22, 20:28 14:23 and 15:41.

<sup>21</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 853.

<sup>22</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 856-857.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 16:1, 4, 5, 16, 23. 1 Corinthians 1:2; 7:17; 6:4; 7:17; 1 Corinthians 11:16, 18; 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 8:1-24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Galatians 1:2, 22; Colossians 4:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 4; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; 5:16; Philemon 1:2.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 2:12; James 5:14; 3 John 1:6, 9-10 and the churches addressed in Revelation 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:32; 11:32; 12:28; 14:1-35; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 31; 5:23-32; Philippians 3:6.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 12:23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.



therefore used to designate all the churches (15:41; 16:5). The singular can also be used to designate all the believers in a given city (5:11; 8:1); and it can even designate the church at large—"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up" (9:31). The only attribute used of the church in Acts appears in the expression, "the church of God." (20:28), and here it is used of the Ephesian church as the representative of the total church.<sup>27</sup>

It is fitting that *evkkhlhsi,a* can refer to the local gathering as well as the universal church since its adherents saw a relationship between both assemblies. As Ladd continues:

These uses of *ecclesia* suggest that *the* church is not merely the total number of all local churches or the totality of all believers; rather, the local congregation is the church in local expression. The church in Ephesus is *the* church of God, not merely a part of the church of God. This is a reflection of the fact that all churches felt they belonged to one another because they jointly belonged to Christ. There could be but one church; and this one church of God expressed itself locally in the fellowship of believers. However, this unity was not something formally imposed or outwardly sustained; it was a reflection in the concrete experience of the true nature of the one church.<sup>28</sup>

### **What is a Local Church?**

Although the book of Acts records the historical foundation of the New Testament church and Paul writes a dozen letters to churches and church leaders, the New Testament does not explicitly define what a local church is. Charles Ryrie writes that "the New Testament does not provide a formal definition of a local church, but it does describe the normal features of a functioning local assembly."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, one must look at the practices of the New Testament Church and the assertions of theological scholars to attempt to construct a brief historical, theological and biblical ecclesiology. What should be regarded as the marks that identify a local church? What are the

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<sup>27</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 390-391.

<sup>28</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 391.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 141.



functions of a local church? And by what means does a church pursue or achieve these functions?

## **Marks of a Local Church**

The Reformers Luther and Calvin are somewhat similar in their description of a local church. The Lutheran view of a local church (though it was written by Luther's colleague Philip Melancthon, Professor of New Testament at Wittenberg University) is stated in the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. The Augsburg Confession defines the church as "the congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered."<sup>30</sup> Likewise, in identifying a church, Calvin writes: "Whenever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church exists."<sup>31</sup>

Ryrie proposed that a local church is "an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God's will."<sup>32</sup> Though L. Berkhof does not specifically define what a local church is, he notes that there are three marks of the church: 1.) true preaching of the word, 2.) right administration of the sacraments and 3.) faithful exercise of discipline.<sup>33</sup>

Grudem also states that in addition to the preaching of the word, a church is marked by the administration of the sacraments. "Once an organization begins to

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<sup>30</sup> Philip Melancthon, *Augsburg Confession*, Article VII, 1530. (Referenced in Grudem).

<sup>31</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.1.9 (2 vol. Ed. By John T. McNiell. Translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battle. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). Referenced in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*), 1023.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 141.

<sup>33</sup> L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 577-578.



practice baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is a continuing organization and is attempting to function as a church."<sup>34</sup> Grudem further believes that these sacraments serve as "membership controls," for baptism is a sacrament that admits believers into the fellowship and communion is a sign of continual membership and participation. Thus the church can and should use these ordinances to signify those who are considered to be saved.<sup>35</sup> Further, Grudem believes that those organizations or ministries (such as street corner preaching, campus ministry, and home Bible studies) that do not administer the sacraments indicate that they are not attempting to behave as a local church.

### **Functions of a Local Church**

Millard Erickson describes four functions of a local church. According to Erickson, a church exists for the purposes of the: 1.) worship of God, 2.) evangelism of unbelievers, 3.) edification of believers, and 4.) concern for the socially disadvantaged.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Wayne Grudem states that a church exists to minister in three ways can't can be described as: 1.) ministry to the world through evangelism 2.) ministry to God through worship and 3.) ministry to other believers through nurture.<sup>37</sup> However, Grudem does include the obligation of the church to address social concerns to be part of the ministry of evangelism. Therefore, Erickson and Grudem both see the local church to be anchored around the three primary functions that include worship, evangelism and discipleship.

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<sup>34</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 865.

<sup>35</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 865-866.

<sup>36</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1060-1069.

<sup>37</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 867-868.



## Worship

The church also exists to worship God. Paul tells the Colossian church to “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16)<sup>38</sup> and the church at Ephesus to “speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).<sup>39</sup>

Worship must not be limited to singing alone, but demonstrated in an awareness of and obedience to the scriptures,<sup>40</sup> making oneself available to God for service and living a life of holiness and devotion to God.<sup>41</sup> Alexander and Dever write that this is done “by hearing and heeding His Word, confessing our own sinfulness and our dependence on Him, thanking Him for His goodness to us, bringing our requests before Him, confessing His truth, and lifting our voices and instruments to Him in response to Him and in according with the way that He has revealed Himself in His Word.”<sup>42</sup>

## Evangelism

The local church is to participate in fulfilling Jesus’ post-resurrection, evangelistic imperatives of “making disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19-20)<sup>43</sup> and being

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<sup>38</sup> Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

<sup>39</sup> Ephesians 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 24:14 However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

<sup>41</sup> Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

Ephesians 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Alexander and Mark Dever, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 115.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”



“witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).<sup>44</sup> These passages contain the Great Commission and the final instructions of our Savior before His return to the presence of the Father in heaven.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Christ tells His followers to make disciples of all people, regardless of national identity and to see that they are taught obedience to the commands of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). The Son of David had been revealed to be the savior of all mankind and his followers are called to make disciples of all nations (ε;qnoj).<sup>45</sup>

Jesus commanded believers in Acts 1:8 to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. As Erickson writes, “this was the final point Jesus made to his disciples. It appears that he regarded evangelism as the very reason for their being.”<sup>46</sup> This command given to the disciples is no less imperative for the local church today. Though Van Unnik and others have thought the phrase “ends of the earth” refers specifically to Rome,<sup>47</sup> it is more probable that it has a wider reference. The end of Acts does not demonstrate the completion of this command, but only the first phase of it.<sup>48</sup> F.F. Bruce contends that the “ends of the earth” and nothing short of it is the limit of the apostolic testimony and Christian witness.<sup>49</sup>

The local church exists partially to contribute to fulfilling the redemptive purposes of God. Paul writes that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1

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<sup>44</sup> Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>45</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999). Barclay-Newman define ε;qnoj as *nation, people, non-Jews, Gentiles; pagans, heathen, unbelievers (nations)*.

<sup>46</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1061.

<sup>47</sup> Van Unnik, originally as *Die Apostelgeschichte und die Haresien*, (ZNW, 1968) 386-401, referenced in I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 61.

<sup>48</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1980), 61.

<sup>49</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 36.



Timothy 1:15)<sup>50</sup> and “(God our Savior) wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).<sup>51</sup> These passages should cause the church to be sober concerning evangelism for they reveal our need for salvation and the fact that Christ is the only way to salvation. Paul states that he is the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and that “there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). It is not surprising that Erikson writes that operating without evangelism ensures that churches “will be attempting to function in a way its Lord never intended”,<sup>52</sup>

One particular aspect of evangelism involves care for the socially afflicted and marginalized. Jesus describes himself as one who came to heal the sick and raise the dead. He fed the hungry,<sup>53</sup> delivered the tormented,<sup>54</sup> healed the sick<sup>55</sup> and comforted the hurting.<sup>56</sup>

The story of the Good Samaritan<sup>57</sup> may be Jesus’ most recognizable parable. Jesus tells this tale to expose the hypocrisy of religious leaders who use spiritual titles and ministry as an excuse for failing to show compassion to the hurting ones who are present, immediate, legitimate and desperate. Jesus also tells of sheep and goats that will be separated on the last day; the sheep to everlasting bliss, the goats to everlasting

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<sup>50</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Timothy 2:4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men-- the testimony given in its proper time.

<sup>52</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1061.

<sup>53</sup> As seen in the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:15-21) and the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-38).

<sup>54</sup> Luke 5:31-36.

<sup>55</sup> Luke 4:38-42; 5: 12-26, et al.

<sup>56</sup> John 4:4-26.

<sup>57</sup> Luke 10:30-37.



torment. Jesus rewards those on his right for he tells them "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 24:34-40).<sup>58</sup>

The New Testament church demonstrated concern for one another by pulling their resources together to help those who had need (Acts 2:25)<sup>59</sup> and especially cared for the widows within their community who were unable to care for themselves by distributing food daily to them (Acts 6:1-7).<sup>60</sup>

This concern for the poor is also seen in the writings of the apostles. When James, Peter and John recognized the grace given to Paul and the necessity of his ministry to the Gentiles, they asked Paul and Barnabas to continue to remember the poor, which Paul said he was eager to do (Galatians 2:9-10).<sup>61</sup> James also tells the dispersed believers in his epistle that the evidence of pure and faultless faith is demonstrated by caring for those who are unable to care for themselves (James 1:27).<sup>62</sup>

It must be noted that the primary ministry of the church is the worship of Christ and the proclamation of His word. Therefore, service to the continually needy (Matthew 26:11)<sup>63</sup> should never distract from that (Luke 10:39-42).<sup>64</sup> The church must also

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<sup>58</sup> Matthew 25: 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me....' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

<sup>59</sup> Acts 2:45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 6:1-7.

<sup>61</sup> Galatians 2:9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

<sup>62</sup> James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 26:11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. (See also Mark 14:7; John 12:8).



remember to care for those who belong to the family of God first<sup>65</sup> and then to those who are unbelievers. Grudem notes well that the church must continue to care for the lost, (Luke 6:35-36)<sup>66</sup> regardless of how they may respond.<sup>67</sup>

## Discipleship

Erickson notes that “although Jesus laid greater emphasis on evangelism, the edification of believers is logically prior.”<sup>68</sup> It is difficult for unbelievers to be evangelized if believers are not first matured and equipped. Therefore the discipleship emphasis should be on “preparing God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12)<sup>69</sup> and the actions of the church should meet that end. Erickson writes “the potential for edification is the criterion by which all activities, including our speech are to be measured.”<sup>70</sup> That is why Paul writes that believers should only speak that which will encourage one another (Ephesians 4:29).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Luke 10:38-42 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

<sup>65</sup> Acts 11:29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

2 Corinthians 8:4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

1 John 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

<sup>66</sup> Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

<sup>67</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 868.

<sup>68</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1063.

<sup>69</sup> Ephesians 4:12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

<sup>70</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1064.

<sup>71</sup> Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.



Since the Great Commission calls believers to make disciples, the church has been committed to edifying, nurturing, and developing disciples. Grudem agrees with Paul that the goal is to “present every Christian mature in Christ.”<sup>72</sup>

According to Erickson, this is done through four primary means that include fellowship, teaching, preaching and equipping.<sup>73</sup> The first is through fellowship. Fellowship, from *koinwni*, a, (*fellowship, a close mutual relationship; participation, sharing in; partnership; contribution, gift*)<sup>74</sup> refers to the healthy, encouraging and sacrificial relationship believers are to have for one another. Early Christians not only held possessions in common, (Acts 2:44)<sup>75</sup> but experiences as well (1 Corinthians 12:26).<sup>76</sup> The church is to bear the burdens of one another (Galatians 6:2)<sup>77</sup> and when necessary, lovingly exercise discipline in order to bring repentance and restoration (Matthew 18:15-18).<sup>78</sup>

A second means of edification is teaching. Jesus instructs His followers in the Great Commission to be “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).<sup>79</sup> A picture of this is seen in Acts 18. Apollos was a gifted teacher,

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<sup>72</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 867. Paul writes in Colossians 1:28 “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

<sup>73</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1064-1066.

<sup>74</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> Acts 2:44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

<sup>76</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

<sup>77</sup> Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

<sup>78</sup> Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18 “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 28:19-20.



though he was misguided at first. As such, Priscilla and Aquila invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:25-26).<sup>80</sup> After being taught properly, Apollos became effective because both in his teaching within the church and his proclamation outside of it, arguing cogently that Jesus was the Messiah the scriptures spoke of.<sup>81</sup>

Preaching has been a means of edification since the foundation of the church. Erickson believes that Paul’s reference to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:3-4)<sup>82</sup> probably refers to the act of preaching.<sup>83</sup> The person who participates in this ministry “speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort...he who prophesies edifies the church.”

Finally, the church edifies believers by equipping them to recognize and use the gifts bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit. These gifts, listed in four different passages,<sup>84</sup> are given to the church so that the body of Christ may be strengthened and equipped for service (Ephesians 4:12).<sup>85</sup>

### **Means of Grace in a Local Church**

The local church carries out the activities that lead to worship, conversion, maturity, and fellowship through instruments referred to by some as the *means of grace*.

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<sup>80</sup> Acts 18:25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

<sup>81</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 360-361.

<sup>82</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:3 But everyone who prophesies “speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.”

<sup>83</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1065.

<sup>84</sup> Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Peter 4:11.

<sup>85</sup> Ephesians 4:12 to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.



Grudem defines *means of grace* as the “activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians”<sup>86</sup>

Many theologians disagree on what should be considered among these means. Grudem notes that some theologians restrict the means of grace to the preaching of the word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>87</sup> Among those who hold this view is Berkhof, who writes: “Strictly speaking, only the Word and the sacraments can be regarded as means of grace, that is, as objective channels which Christ instituted in the church and to which He ordinarily binds himself in the communication of His grace.”<sup>88</sup> Berkhof states this in opposition to Charles Hodge, who views prayer as a fourth means of grace<sup>89</sup> and McPherson who includes the Church as a fifth means in addition to prayer.<sup>90</sup>

Grudem expands the *means of grace* available to include: teaching of the word, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, prayer for one another, worship, church discipline, giving, spiritual gifts, fellowship, evangelism, and personal ministry to individuals. These are available to all believers in the church and the Holy Spirit works through all of them to bring various blessings to individuals.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 951-952.

<sup>87</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 951-952.

<sup>88</sup> L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 604-605. Berkhof notes that although the term “*means of grace*” is not found in the Bible, it is nevertheless “a proper designation of the means that are indicated in the Bible” Though Berkhof would only affirm the word and the sacraments as the indisputable means of grace, he also was careful to note that, “These may never be dissociated from Christ, nor from the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, nor from the Church which is the appointed organ for the distribution of the blessing of divine grace. They are in themselves quite ineffective and are productive of spiritual results only through the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>89</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, reprint) Vol. 3:692-709.

<sup>90</sup> L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 604-605.

<sup>91</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 951.



## What Does Local Church Leadership Look Like in the New Testament?

Although scripture is clear that leadership is a divine requirement (Hebrews 13:7, 17),<sup>92</sup> it is less clear how this requirement should be structured. Therefore the church must look to the practices of the apostles and content of the epistles to determine an appropriate biblical framework for leadership. In order to do this, a brief overview of the three different biblical models will be surveyed. Charles Ryrie writes of three primary types of church government that are practiced today. They include hierarchical, federal and congregational.<sup>93</sup>

### Structures of a Local Church

A *Hierarchical* form of government is practiced when bishops alone govern the church, though elders and deacons may be present.<sup>94</sup> This model is practiced in various ways by Roman Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal and Lutheran churches. In this structure, bishops alone have the power to ordain.

Though the Jerusalem church appointed deacons<sup>95</sup> and Titus was told to appoint elders<sup>96</sup> Ryrie notes the *hierarchical* form of government is not found in the New

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<sup>92</sup> Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 146-147. Ryrie also includes two other forms. 1.) The national church government, where the head of state is the head of the church as seen in the Church of England. 2.) No church government, where all leadership is rejected except the headship of Christ. However, in this model, as soon as a decision has to be made, humans will automatically begin acting in some decisive role and by default one of the above models.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 146.

<sup>95</sup> Acts 6:1-7.

<sup>96</sup> Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.



Testament, but arose during the second century.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, Ladd believes that it is after the apostolic age, especially in Ignatius that the bishop emerges as distinct and superior to the elders that gave rise to a monarchical bishop.<sup>98</sup>

In a *federal* form of church government, the church is governed by elders that receive their authority from the congregation.<sup>99</sup> This model is seen most often in Presbyterian as well as some independent churches. Those in support of this structure note that elders were appointed by the apostles (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5),<sup>100</sup> and other leaders aside from the apostles were present in churches (Hebrews 13:7, 17),<sup>101</sup> and leaders were given instruction of what to do when dealing with discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-11).<sup>102</sup>

In the *congregational* structure, government is in hands of members themselves, and not in any man or group of men. Baptist, Evangelical Free and many independent churches follow this pattern. According to Ryrie, the pastor is usually ordained to administer the sacraments and recognized similar to an elder in the New Testament with multiple deacons being assigned the responsibility of caring for the church. The pastor and deacons are voted on by the entire congregation as well as all major decisions

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<sup>97</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 146.

<sup>98</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 578.

<sup>99</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 146.

<sup>100</sup> Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

<sup>101</sup> Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

<sup>102</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:1-11.



affecting the life of the church.<sup>103</sup> Those who support a congregational structure will often look to the responsibility given to entire congregations,<sup>104</sup> particularly regarding the involvement of the whole church when choosing leaders<sup>105</sup> and exercising discipline.<sup>106</sup>

### **Apostolic leadership**

These divergent models may have arisen because the scriptures do not mandate a normative pattern for church leadership. According to Ladd, “It appears likely that there was no normative pattern of church government in the apostolic age and that the organizational structure of the church is no essential element in the theology of the church.” Therefore, Ladd goes on to say: “In view of the central theological emphasis on the unity of the church, it is important to understand that unity does not mean organizational uniformity.”<sup>107</sup>

With no direct instruction on how to organize church leadership, one must look to the practices of the New Testament church as well as the epistles of Paul, Peter and other New Testament writers. Though modern readers do not have charters or by-laws of first century churches, one is able to observe many of the instructions the apostles gave to the local churches.

These early churches were led through leadership of the apostles. As Ladd writes, “Their only leaders were the apostles, whose authority was apparently spiritual, but not legal. There was no organization and no appointed leaders. The *evkkhlhsi,a* was not what

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<sup>103</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 147. Ryrie also notes that John writes in Revelation to seven churches, each with a singular human leader that is referred to as an angel.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>104</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 1:27.

<sup>105</sup> Acts 6:3,5; 15:2-3 and 2 Corinthians 8:19).

<sup>106</sup> Matt 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Thessalonians 3:14.

<sup>107</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 579.



it is today; an organized institution. It was a small, open fellowship of Jews within Judaism”<sup>108</sup>

This informal and open fellowship spread across various regions. The early believers shared closely what was happening among the congregations (Colossians 4:9),<sup>109</sup> possessed a deep love for another (1 Thessalonians 4:10),<sup>110</sup> boasted about one another (2 Thessalonians 1:4),<sup>111</sup> and prayed for one another (2 Thessalonians 3:1).<sup>112</sup> Though scripture does not describe an organized institution, there certainly was a relationship and fellowship among many of these churches.

The apostles exercised oversight among these newly established churches. Paul was seen by the New Testament churches as having authority over the churches under his care. Paul gave direction to the church at Philippi to obey when he was absent as well as present (Philippians 2:12).<sup>113</sup> Paul exercised leadership over some congregations by appointing Titus to Crete and Timothy to Ephesus. Along with Barnabas, Paul appointed elders in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (Acts 14:21-23).

Paul wanted leadership to begin taking place at the local level although he had apostolic authority to exercise leadership remotely. Paul had received a report of many of the problems occurring within the Corinthian church and wrote two canonical letters to these believers from afar. The way Paul deals with one particular issue in the Corinthian

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<sup>108</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 388.

<sup>109</sup> Colossians 4:9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

<sup>110</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

<sup>111</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

<sup>112</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

<sup>113</sup> Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.



church (1 Corinthians 5:1-13) shows much detail about the relationship between Paul and the church at Corinth and between his leadership positions and their local responsibility. This concerned a heinous sexual sin in which a man had been sexually intimate with the wife of his father. Paul was upset that the local assembly had not already disciplined the man themselves and instructs them to excommunicate this man (literally, “to hand him over to Satan”).

Paul, although bodily absent, was still able to judge them remotely because he was spiritually present as shown in the correlative conjunction *me.n...de*. The church was to follow his directives. Yet, the authority to execute this judgment did not come from Paul, but rather from the name of Christ. The phrase *ovno,mati tou/ kuri,ou Ih`mw/nÐ VIhsou/* contains a genitive of apposition meaning “the name which is Christ” or genitive of possessive meaning “the name belonging to Christ.” The phrase *evn tw/l ovno,mati* is seen throughout the New Testament as an appeal to the authority of Christ. It is in the name of Christ that demons are cast out (Mark 16:17),<sup>114</sup> prayers are answered (John 14:14),<sup>115</sup> eternal life is given (John 20:31),<sup>116</sup> people are healed (Acts 4:10),<sup>117</sup> and everyone shall worship (Philippians 2:10).<sup>118</sup> Paul exercised authority in this matter, yet instead of appealing to his own name, Paul appeals to the name of Christ (5:4).<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Mark 16:17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues.

<sup>115</sup> John 14:14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

<sup>116</sup> John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

<sup>117</sup> Acts 4:10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

<sup>118</sup> Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

<sup>119</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus (NASB).



Paul wanted the church to exercise discipline on a local level among the assembly of believers. The local believers had the responsibility to execute judgment of this individual and should have done so already (v. 2).<sup>120</sup> Paul became involved and passed judgment only because the church at Corinth had failed to do so initially. This affirms not only the authority of Paul, but his desire for leadership to take place among the local congregation.

Paul held apostolic authority within the first century church that was limited to himself and his fellow apostles. Paul was not only an apostle, he considered himself the least and the last called of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15: 8-9).<sup>121</sup> Martin rightly observes that Paul based his claim of apostleship on having seen the risen Christ and his commissioning by Christ to go to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 9:1, 15:8-9; Galatians 1:11-17).<sup>122</sup> His unique role came as a result of his unique call.<sup>123</sup>

Because apostolic leadership would be limited to the lifespan of these apostles, Paul appeared to have been orchestrating a system where each church would govern themselves locally under a system of elders. Guthrie writes that the Pastoral Epistles “show the apostle in a significant light as an ecclesiastical architect. It is not that orthodoxy and organization have become the absorbing passion in his last days, but rather

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<sup>120</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:2 And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst (NASB).

<sup>121</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:8-9 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

<sup>122</sup> Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1993); 46-50.

<sup>123</sup> Churches must be cautious when using Paul's apostolic role as a paradigm for contemporary ministry structure and practices. Multi-site practitioners must be careful not to appeal to the position of Paul while ignoring his instructions. Thomas White has written: “...In Paul's letters he upheld congregational authority. In 1 Corinthians 5:4 and 5:13 Paul upholds the necessity of congregational action and governance, which I do not see in the multi-site methodology.”<sup>123</sup>



that sagacious provisions have been made for a time when no apostolic witness will remain, and the Spirit of God will use other means to direct his people.”<sup>124</sup>

## **The Establishment of Elders**

Grudem believes that Paul’s design is seen in a uniform leadership system governed by elders. Grudem writes that “we do not see a diversity of forms of government in the New Testament church, but a unified and consistent pattern in which every church had elders governing it and keeping watch over it (Acts 20:28, Heb 13:7 and 1 Peter 5:2-3).”<sup>125</sup> However, Guthrie states that that Paul “appears to have been sufficiently flexible in his approach to allow any system which suited local conditions and was directed by the Holy Spirit”<sup>126</sup>

I. Howard Marshall maintains that Paul made provision for spiritual guidance in the local churches and he expected the church to respect and submit to these leaders. The appointing of these elders demonstrates that Paul possessed authority over these congregations, and was concerned about how they operated locally.<sup>127</sup> The Pauline churches had recognized leaders whom were to be followed and respected by others within the congregations. In Paul’s appeal to the Thessalonians, he tells the letter’s

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<sup>124</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990), 39.

<sup>125</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 913.

Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

1 Peter 5:2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

<sup>126</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990), 39. Guthrie also notes that (as seen in Acts 20:28) that Paul saw the Ephesian elder-system (as seen in was the Holy Spirit’s appointment and an indirect confirmation) was already operative prior to Timothy’s arrival to take up his duties. 35.

<sup>127</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 241.



recipients to respect those “who are over you in the Lord and admonish you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12)<sup>128</sup> The phrase *proi?stame,nouj u`mw/n* “(who are over you)” features the participle *proi?stame,nouj* from *proi<sthmi* meaning *be a leader, have authority over, manage; care for, give help; engage in, practice*.<sup>129</sup> Ladd notes that this same root is used to refer to the household management qualifications for bishops (1 Timothy 3:4),<sup>130</sup> deacons (1 Tim 3:12)<sup>131</sup> and elders (1 Tim 5:17).<sup>132</sup> These leaders were to care for the local church and the local church while congregants were to submit to the care, oversight and direction of these elders.

### The Origins of Elder Leadership

In order to understand the New Testament role of elder, one must first understand the grammatical, secular and historical development of *presbu,teroj* from which is translated *elder*. According to Barclay-Newman<sup>133</sup> *presbu,teroj* is: an *elder (of the Jewish religious leaders and of church leaders); elder (of two sons); eldest*;<sup>134</sup> or an *old man or woman* (Acts 2:17; 1 Timothy 5:2).<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:12 Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.

<sup>129</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>130</sup> 1 Timothy 3:4 He must manage (*proi?sta,menon*) his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

<sup>131</sup> 1 Timothy 3:12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage (*proi?sta,menoi*) his children and his household well.

<sup>132</sup> 1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who direct (*proestw/tej*) the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

<sup>133</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>134</sup> John 8:9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

<sup>135</sup> Acts 2:17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 1 Timothy 5:2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.



Arndt, Bauer, Danker and Gingrich<sup>136</sup> write that *presbu,teroj* was an *official among the Jews* as seen in the congregation of a synagogue in Jerusalem, that used the form *presbu,teroi* to denote officers before 70 A.D. Further, they note that in the Septuagint, *presbu,teroj* referred to members of local councils in individual cities as seen in Ruth 4:2.<sup>137</sup>

In the New Testament, *presbu,teroj* refers to members of a group within the Sanhedrin.<sup>138</sup> Among Christians, the use of *presbu,teroj*, was not exclusively a title that was understood in light of the Jewish custom, but also carried the wider gentile meaning of *old ones*<sup>139</sup> and to designate civic as well as religious officials.<sup>140</sup> John uses *presbu,teroi* in his two smallest letters to describe a person of great dignity, even though the exact function of that person is unclear. In Revelation, John refers to *presbu,teroj* as the twenty four who sit about the throne of God and form the heavenly council of elders.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> William F. Arndt, Walter F. Bauer, Fredric William Danker, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 862-863.

<sup>137</sup> Ruth 4:2 Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so.

<sup>138</sup> Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

<sup>139</sup> 1 Timothy 5:1 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers.

<sup>140</sup> Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

<sup>141</sup> Revelation 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. See also: Revelation 4:10; 5:5-14; 7:11-13; 11:16; 14:3 and 19:4.



The origins of the leadership role of an *presbuter* came from ancient Judaism. Davis notes that the term “elder” *presbuter*, is associated mainly with the as Jewish structure of shared leadership. According to Davis,

The frequent references in the gospels to the elders of the Jews reflect the structure of the Jewish nation as organized around groups of elders whether it be on the national level (the Great Sanhedrin) or the village council level or the synagogue level inside our outside of Palestine... Thus it was natural for the early church, which at first was simply an alternative “messianic” synagogue and even in Gentile areas normally began with a of Jews, to take over this structure.<sup>142</sup>

### **The Responsibilities of Leadership**

According to Arndt, Bauer, Danker and Gingrich, the duties of the *presbuter*, were exhortation and preaching.<sup>143</sup> Ryrie notes three main leadership functions of elder.<sup>144</sup> The elder was to “direct the affairs of the church” (1 Timothy 5:17),<sup>145</sup> guard truth by being “able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9)<sup>146</sup> and supervise financial matters (Acts 11:30).<sup>147</sup>

According to Ladd, elders exercise a threefold function of ruling, preaching and teaching although “the wording of the passage<sup>148</sup> suggests that all elders rule, but not all engage in preaching and teaching.”<sup>149</sup> Ladd goes on to say that this “coincides with the

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<sup>142</sup> Peter Davis, *The First Epistle of Peter*. (Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 1990), 175-176.

<sup>143</sup> William F. Arndt, Walter F. Bauer, Fredric William Danker, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 862. It is also worth noting that the English word “priest” came from the Latin *presbyter*; and its use within later Christian context is responsible for this development.

<sup>144</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 143.

<sup>145</sup> 1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

<sup>146</sup> Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (NASB).

<sup>147</sup> Acts 11:30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

<sup>148</sup> Ladd is referring to 1 Timothy 5:17-22.

<sup>149</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 578.



injunction of Paul to the Ephesian elders to shepherd the flock, oversee it, and feed it (Acts 20:28).”<sup>150</sup>

## **The Selection of Elders**

Paul appointed men of character to be elders and provide leadership for the church. According to F.F. Bruce, members who had attained a respectable level of maturity were called upon to serve as guides by giving fruitful instruction the believers would need in order to remain steadfast despite persecution.<sup>151</sup> However, it is unclear as to how these elders were selected. As Ladd points out:

We are not told when or how or why they (the elders) were chosen; we can only use our historical imagination to reconstruct what probably happened. Both Jewish communities and synagogues were ruled by a group of elders and since the primitive church externally was little different from a Jewish synagogue, we may assume that when the apostles began to engage in preaching outside of Jerusalem, elders were chosen to take their place and to rule over the Jerusalem church. If so, we must think of a college of elders, to a single elder over each congregation.”<sup>152</sup>

Grudem sees the leadership of elders as the ministry of Peter as well. Grudem also states that “Peter assumes that all these churches whether founded by Paul or by others, whether predominately Gentile or predominately Jewish or evenly divided in their make up, would have elders leading them.”<sup>153</sup>

Ryrie and Ladd hold that elders and bishops occupy the same position in the church. According to Ryrie, elder (presbu,teroj) emphasizes office while bishop (evpi,skopoj) emphasizes the function of general oversight.<sup>154</sup> Ladd agrees with this view

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<sup>150</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 578.

<sup>151</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 280.

<sup>152</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 389.

<sup>153</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 912.

<sup>154</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 143.



stating that “these leaders were called not only elders but bishops (evpi,skopoj), a term designating their function of overseeing the church.”<sup>155</sup>

The root evpi,skopoj, (*overseer, guardian; bishop*)<sup>156</sup> occurs only five times in the New Testament.<sup>157</sup> In each of these occurrences, it refers to the act or position of oversight. In two of these instances, it is referring to elders who are mentioned in the same passage. As Ladd writes: “That these are two designation of the same office is shown by the fact that the elders whom Paul called together at Miletus from Ephesus are also called bishops.”<sup>158</sup> This is seen in Acts 20:17<sup>159</sup> and Acts 20:28.<sup>160</sup>

Ladd also mentions that Paul uses these terms interchangeably while giving direction to Titus for leading the church that was established in Crete.<sup>161</sup> This can be seen in Titus 1:5 where Paul tells Titus that he is to “appoint elders (presbute,rouj) in every town, as I directed you.”<sup>162</sup> In Titus 1:7, Paul also states that an overseer (evpi,skopon) is entrusted with God's work, and therefore must be a person of blameless character.<sup>163</sup>

As mentioned earlier, a distinct office of *bishop*, who possessed the power to appoint and ordain elders, is not seen in the New Testament and probably did not occur until the second century. According to Arndt, Bauer, Danker and Gingrich, it was

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<sup>155</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 389.

<sup>156</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>157</sup> Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7 and 1 Peter 2:25.

<sup>158</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 389.

<sup>159</sup> Acts 20:17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders (presbute,rouj) of the church.

<sup>160</sup> Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (evpisko,pouj). Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood

<sup>161</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 389.

<sup>162</sup> Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders (presbute,rouj) in every town, as I directed you.

<sup>163</sup> Titus 1:7 Since an overseer (evpi,skopon) is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-- not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.



Ignatius who said "the presbyteroi came after the bishop to whom they are subordinate."<sup>164</sup>

## The Plurality of Elders

Though the New Testament is clear in recognizing the presence of elders, Ryrie and Ladd believe the scripture is less clear as to the number of and organization of these leaders. Ryrie recognizes the presence of elders in each city where there were churches. However, he believes that it is unclear if there were several elders in each house church or if an elder is in each individual congregation.<sup>165</sup> Ladd likewise affirms this ambiguity.

It is not clear whether there was a single elder-bishop over each local congregation or a college of elders as in a Jewish synagogue; and in a large city with several congregations, it is not clear whether the elders of the several congregations consisted a single presbytery for the Christian community of the entire city.<sup>166</sup>

Grudem believes that the scripture is clear that the pattern of New Testament leadership involved plurality of elders in every church.<sup>167</sup> Grudem references the fact that Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders for them in each church"<sup>168</sup> and that Paul directed Titus to "appoint elders in every town"<sup>169</sup> Grudem also notes that although the word "elder" is not used, the epistle to the Hebrews is written to a congregation that

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<sup>164</sup> William F. Arndt, Walter F. Bauer, Fredric William Danker, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 862. It is also worth noting that the English word "priest" came from the Latin *presbyter*; and its use within later Christian context is responsible for this development.

<sup>165</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 143.

<sup>166</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 579.

<sup>167</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 913.

<sup>168</sup> Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

<sup>169</sup> Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.



featured a plurality of elders<sup>170</sup> for they were told to “Remember your leaders...consider the outcome of their way of life.”<sup>171</sup>

Peter recognized a plurality of elders as well. Peter considered himself a “fellow elder” (1 Peter 5:1).<sup>172</sup> Peter Davis notes that the term “fellow elder” (*sumpresbu,teroj*) has not been found elsewhere in ancient literature and was probably coined by Peter.<sup>173</sup> Davis notes how *sumpresbu,teroj* is similar to number of compound words that Paul used to describe those who worked with him in ministry that included fellow-worker,<sup>174</sup> fellow slave,<sup>175</sup> and although a somewhat different meaning, fellow-prisoner.<sup>176</sup> Davis states that this would be used to stress his empathy with the elders rather than his authority over them as he is writing to churches where he has no personal contact.<sup>177</sup>

Paul also saw himself as an elder among elders. In the two Thessalonian letters, Paul, Silas and Timothy use the word “we” sixty times. In Colossians 1:28, Paul says, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”<sup>178</sup> Though the Thessalonians and Colossians were to

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<sup>170</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 912.

<sup>171</sup> Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

<sup>172</sup> 1 Peter 5:1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

Wayne Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1990), 185-186. Grudem finds it remarkable that Peter uses the less exalted title of “fellow elder” to refer to himself. Grudem believes his further description as one who was a witness of the sufferings of Christ may be to demonstrate to his readers that he is not only sympathetic with their positions, but can relate to their failures as well, reminding them of his bitter failure through his denial of Christ.

<sup>173</sup> Peter Davis, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1990), 176

<sup>174</sup> Romans 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. See also Romans 16:9, 21; Philippians 2:25 and Philemon 2.

<sup>175</sup> Colossians 1:7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf.

Colossians 4:7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

<sup>176</sup> Romans 16:7, Colossians 4:10, and Philemon 23.

<sup>177</sup> Peter Davis, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 1990), 176.

<sup>178</sup> Colossians 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.



make the letters available to each other, they were not supposed to make too much of Paul, as he was one of many teaching elders with which they came into contact.

Local ministry in the New Testament was never built around a single individual. Alexander Strauch notes that, "It is immensely profound that no special priestly or clerical class that is distinct from the whole people of God appears in the New Testament."<sup>179</sup> Even the apostles themselves saw their own leadership as shared as demonstrated in the Jerusalem Council.

Shared leadership is also seen in the fact that scripture recognizes, but does not command, a plurality of teachers. Jesus appointed a plurality of disciples to preach (Mark 3:14).<sup>180</sup> Multiple teachers are seen in Acts 10:41-43 where "He commanded us to preach" and in Acts 14:21-23 where "They preached the good news" and "appointed elders for them in each church"<sup>181</sup> In the letter that Paul and Timothy addressed to the Philippians, they acknowledged the presence of multiple leaders writing, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons"<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1987), 37. Strauch goes on to write "During the first century no Christian would have dared to take the position or title of sole ruler, overseer, or pastor of the church...(for) there is only one flock and one Pastor (John 10:16), one body and one Head (Colossians 1:18) one holy priesthood and one great High Priest (Hebrews. 4:14ff), one brotherhood and one Elder Brother (Romans 8:29), one building and one Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:5ff.), one Mediator, and one Lord, Jesus. Jesus is the 'Senior Pastor,' and all others are His under shepherds (1 Peter 5:4)." 40.

<sup>180</sup> Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

<sup>181</sup> Acts 14:21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

<sup>182</sup> Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.



A plurality of teachers and prophets enabled the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1)<sup>183</sup> to diffuse leadership and diversify culturally. This was demonstrated by the ethnic, cultural and geographical diversity among the elders. Bruce<sup>184</sup> and Marshall<sup>185</sup> both make reference to racial diversity at Antioch where Symeon was, according to Bruce, “presumably a man of dark complexion.” Lucius, whose identity is unknown, was a common Roman name. Manaen, was the foster brother of Herod the Tetrarch, an incredible testimony of the sovereignty of God for he grew up in the same house at the same time as Herod, and yet one is remembered as being an elder in the church at Antioch and the other with the death of John the Baptist and the trial of Jesus.<sup>186</sup>

## **What is the Pastoral Role of Preaching in the Local Church?**

### **The Purpose of Preaching**

One of the chief responsibilities entrusted to an elder is the obligation and privilege of preaching regularly to those God has entrusted to his care. Preaching is a vehicle that God uses to change people lives through His word. The word of God is able to build people up,<sup>187</sup> instruct,<sup>188</sup> give direction,<sup>189</sup> grant wisdom,<sup>190</sup> encourage,<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Acts 13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

<sup>184</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 244.

<sup>185</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 214. Marshall states that this “Symeon, a man bearing a Jewish name and therefore in all probability a Jew; his other name, Niger is Latin and means “dark-complexioned”; in view of the way he is mentioned, just before a Cyrenian, it has been thought that he too came from Cyrene and is to be identified with the Simon who carried the cross of Jesus (Lk. 23:26), but if so it is surprising that Luke has spelled the two names differently from each other.”

<sup>186</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 244-45.

<sup>187</sup> Acts 20:32 “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

<sup>188</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

<sup>189</sup> Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.



comfort<sup>192</sup> and sustain.<sup>193</sup> It is through preaching, that Paul attempted to “present every man complete in Christ.”<sup>194</sup>

### **The Use of Media in Preaching**

This desire to present every man complete in Christ led the absent Paul to deliver messages to distant churches through the use of media. Borrowing from Eric McLuhan and Marshall McLuhan,<sup>195</sup> Shane Hipps defines media as “*anything that stretches, extends, or amplifies some human capacity.*”<sup>196</sup> The medium available to Paul was writing. Paul’s letters were an extension of himself. The parchments gave Paul the ability to extend himself beyond his geographical limitations. Thus, according to the previous definition, Paul used the media available to him to teach congregations at which he could not be physically present.

Paul’s use of writing is seen in his letters to the churches that make up nearly one-third of the New Testament. In addition to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, many other letters within in the New Testament were written to multiple churches within a network throughout a city or region such as Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, and Philippi.

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<sup>190</sup> Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

<sup>191</sup> Acts 15:32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.

<sup>192</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

<sup>193</sup> Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

<sup>194</sup> Colossians 1:28 And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ (NASB).

<sup>195</sup> Eric McLuhan and Marshall McLuhan, *The Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 98.

<sup>196</sup> Shane Hipps, *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 32.



Hebrews, James and the letters of Peter are considered general epistles because they were to be read and circulated among multiple churches.<sup>197</sup>

The use of writing allowed Paul to deliver identical messages to multiple congregations. He tells the Corinthians to give in the same manner that he told the Galatians. “Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.”<sup>198</sup> Paul also commanded the churches in Colossae and Laodicea to exchange their letters stating to the Colossians, “After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea” (Colossians 4:16).<sup>199</sup> Thus, Paul does not appear to prohibit the use of media, he actually utilized and encouraged it.<sup>200</sup>

Paul not only taught through letters, but also ordered at least some of these to be read publically. The early church embraced teaching through the public readings of his letters as seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:27 where Paul tells the readers to “have this letter read to all the brethren.”<sup>201</sup> According to Leon Morris, the word *avmaginw*, not only means “to read” but to “read in public worship.”<sup>202</sup> However, it is unclear if Paul was

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<sup>197</sup> Gerry Breshears and Mark Driscoll, *Vintage Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 244.

<sup>198</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:1 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.

Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 812-813. According to Fee, Paul had passed through Galatia on his way to Ephesus (Acts 18:23) and probably informed the Galatians of the collection and how they should lay it aside. The collection was probably to be brought by one of their own members, as Paul did not plan to return to Jerusalem by way of those congregations

<sup>199</sup> Colossians 4:16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

<sup>200</sup> Geoff Surratt, interviewed by author, January 7, 2010. Because Paul embraced the media of writing, Geoff Surratt of Seacoast Church is among those who believe Paul also would embrace all the electronic media available if he were alive today. Seacoast Church has experienced exponential numerical growth as a result of offering video preaching. Surratt, has noted that there is nothing theologically amiss that prevents video projection. In fact, “Paul probably would have used video.”

<sup>201</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:27 I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.

<sup>202</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 186-188.



intending for the letter to be read aloud for the benefit of those who were illiterate,<sup>203</sup> or if he intended the letter to be read as part of public worship. According to Morris, the reading of letters in a worship service was a sign of inclusion in the canon.<sup>204</sup> It is likely that he did intend the letter to be read publically, if not in a worship service, at some other time the congregation was gathered. Morris also states that Paul asked the letter to be read with insistence as shown by the verb *evnorki, zw* meaning “to place someone under a solemn charge.”<sup>205</sup>

However, it must not be overlooked that even in instances such as these where a letter was to be read, local leadership was still necessary. Although a remote teacher was instructing through the media of writing, the church needed the local elder to deliver and interpret the contents of the letter. These local elders were to proclaim the word, whether directly from the Torah or through the writings of Paul.

### **The Obligation of Preaching**

However, in spite of the availability and use of writing by Paul, the early church was to be instructed and lead primarily by their local pastors. These churches understood that teaching and exhorting were the responsibility of the local elder. Paul commissioned the young Timothy to serve as the pastor of the church in Ephesus and urged him to

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<sup>203</sup> According to Haddon Robinson, ninety percent of the population within the Roman Empire in the first century was illiterate.

<sup>204</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 186-188.

<sup>205</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 186-188. Paul's insistence that this letter be read may come from the controversy stated earlier (2:17-18). It appears that some of the Thessalonians were suggesting that Paul's absence demonstrated that Paul was not sincere. Since Paul was unable to return to them, this letter was to be a demonstration of the love that he felt for them.



preach, teach and exhort the local believers (2 Timothy 4:2).<sup>206</sup> Instead of using writing to directly lead the congregation, Paul wrote to Timothy and exhorted him to lead the believers through preaching and teaching in both of his letters written to Timothy.<sup>207</sup> Paul told Titus, whom he appointed to Crete, at least five times to *instruct* and one to *remind* the believers at Crete.<sup>208</sup> The pastoral epistles reveal that Paul intended the pastors of the local congregations to lead through the faithful preaching of the word of God. The proclamation of the word would prove to be crucial to local ministry. The local leader has been commanded to teach, and to have influence in the lives of people.

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<sup>206</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction.

<sup>207</sup> 1 Timothy 1:3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.

1 Timothy 4:6 If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

1 Timothy 4:11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

1 Timothy 5:1 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers.

1 Timothy 6:2 Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.

2 Timothy 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction.

<sup>208</sup> Titus 2:1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

Titus 2:9 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,

Titus 2:15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

Titus 3:1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.



In order for him to do that effectively, he must be seen as the primary and present exhorter.<sup>209</sup>

## **The Goal of Preaching**

It was important for local elders to be the primary teachers because the early church understood that discipleship involved both teaching and mentoring. According to Paul, discipleship consisted not only of the impartation of knowledge, but the modeling of doctrine and behavior. Paul influenced Timothy by his teaching (2 Timothy 1:13),<sup>210</sup> his way of life and his character (2 Timothy 3:10).<sup>211</sup> His instruction in the life of Timothy would later enable Timothy to influence others (2 Timothy 2:2)<sup>212</sup> just as he and Timothy had influenced the Thessalonians (2 Timothy 3:9).<sup>213</sup>

The Philippians were told to imitate what they had seen, “whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice” (Philippians 4:9a).<sup>214</sup> According to Martin, this was especially significant before the completion and recognition of the canon. The standard of Christian behavior and belief was embodied in the teaching and example of those persons in whose lives the authority and ethical

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<sup>209</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010. Those who worship in video venue sites are having a difficult time establishing, recognizing and submitting to the site pastors. If the local site elder is not exhorting publicly and frequently, he is not recognized as a spiritual leader of the local venue.

<sup>210</sup> 2 Timothy 1:13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

<sup>211</sup> 2 Timothy 3:10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance.

<sup>212</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

<sup>213</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.

<sup>214</sup> Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.



practices of the Lord was to be found.<sup>215</sup> Paul knew the way to influence believers was for someone to be present and capable of modeling doctrine and lifestyle.

The writer of Hebrews recognized that proximity of leadership was critical to influencing believers. He writes that his readers are to “remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7).<sup>216</sup> He urges them to *consider* (avnaqewre,w *observe closely and reflect upon*)<sup>217</sup> their conduct and to *imitate* (mime,omai *imitate, follow another's example*)<sup>218</sup> their faith. Peter O’Brien argues that this outcome only refers to the entire breadth of leader’s life that can only be evaluated after death<sup>219</sup> while Guthrie feels it reflects the practical effects of their lives that can only be seen by careful observation.

Evidently not only their words, but their behavior was worthy of attention. The verb “consider” occurs only here and in Acts 17:23 in the New Testament and implies careful observation. The imitation which is urged upon the readers is no mechanical copying of the actions of others, but a call to emulate their faith.<sup>220</sup>

Finally, Paul knew the local believers needed to see the modeling of impeccable integrity and edifying speech. The primary qualifications of a local elder involve maturity, integrity and the ability to teach. Timothy and Titus were to be and to look for people who had a blameless character and the ability to teach well.<sup>221</sup> One reason this

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<sup>215</sup> Ralph Martin, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 175.

<sup>216</sup> Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

<sup>217</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>218</sup> Barclay-Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (BibleWorks, 1999).

<sup>219</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 516.

<sup>220</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 271.

<sup>221</sup> 2 Timothy 2:24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-- not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to



may be true is that modeling and refuting false doctrine is most easily done in person.

Paul tells the elders of the church at Ephesus to be prepared to refute false doctrine.

You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia...<sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (Acts 20:27-31)

Local pastors must be in a position and have the opportunity to teach and disciple because they will be held responsible by God for how they shepherd the individuals at the local campus. Pastors, as shepherds, are told to “keep watch over (your) souls, as those who will give an account” (Hebrews 13:17).<sup>222</sup> The writer of Hebrews stresses the diligence necessary in watching by using *avgrupne,w*, as seen in Ephesians 6:18.<sup>223</sup> These leaders are to be as diligent and alert watching over their sheep as they are watching over their own posture of prayer, as Paul commanded the believers in Ephesus. According to Guthrie, the writer of Hebrews’ comment is reminiscent of Paul’s concern for the churches expressed in 2 Corinthians 11:28<sup>224</sup> and Peter’s command in 1 Peter

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drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup> Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. <sup>9</sup> He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy 3:2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

<sup>222</sup> Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

<sup>223</sup> Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.. For other occurrence use of *avgrupne,w* (*be alert; watch over*) see Mark 13:33 and Luke 21:36.

<sup>224</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.



5:2<sup>225</sup> for the elder to tend the flock of God being aware that the leader will be asked one day to give an account of those who have been entrusted to his care.<sup>226</sup>

The responsibility for these local ministries was upon the elder sent to them. Timothy was sent to the Thessalonians to strengthen and encourage their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:2).<sup>227</sup> Timothy's visit to Thessalonica was to serve two purposes, as understood by the two verbs that refer to his work. He was first to "strengthen." Morris states that this word (sthri,zw) carries the idea of putting in a buttress or a support in the literal sense and later in a metaphysical sense.<sup>228</sup> Secondly, he was to "encourage" (parakale,w) meaning strengthening or "calling alongside of" as seen earlier<sup>229</sup> in the same epistle. Timothy was sent to encourage the Thessalonians by buttressing their faith.<sup>230</sup>

Paul also sent Tychicus to encourage the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote to them "I am sending him (Tychicus) to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you." (Ephesians 6:22)<sup>231</sup> This same Tychicus was also

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<sup>225</sup> 1 Peter 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.

<sup>226</sup> Thomas White, *Nine Reasons I Don't Like Multi-Site Churches* [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010). Because leaders will give account for their actions and those under their care, Thomas White wonders, "...if video ministers will give account for those multi-site members—people who have never prayed with their pastor at the steps of an altar, shaken his hand on the way out the door, or ever seen him in person. The sheep may know the sound of their shepherd's voice but does the shepherd know anything about these sheep?"

<sup>227</sup> 1 Thessalonians 3:2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.

<sup>228</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 95.

<sup>229</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

<sup>230</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 95.

<sup>231</sup> Ephesians 6:22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.



sent to the Colossians as “a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord” (Colossians 4:7).<sup>232</sup>

### Summary

Church, or *evkkhlsi*, describes both the universal and local collection of believers. In classical Greek, *evkkhlsi*, originally referred to the assembling of the citizens of a city. However, in the book of Acts, it referred to the gathering of all the believers in the Jerusalem church and eventually to the groups of the dispersed believers that met in a particular locale.

The local church is to be recognized as a collection of believers that participate in at least the true preaching of the word and the observance of the sacraments. The local church functions for the purposes of the worship of God, evangelism of unbelievers and the discipleship of true believers.

These functions are achieved through instruments known as *means of grace* through which God increases the grace that people receive. Most theologians say these *means* must include the word and the sacraments. Some theologians believe that this list may be expanded to also include prayer, worship, the church, church discipline, giving, spiritual gifts, fellowship, evangelism, and personal ministry to individuals.

Three predominate leadership models have emerged through the history of the church. Local churches exist in some variation (or combination) of a hierarchical, federal or congregational form of government. These various models probably arose since there is no prescriptive model of church leadership in scripture.

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<sup>232</sup> Colossians 4:7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.



Since the apostolic age was going to come to a close, Paul wanted elders in local assemblies to preach, teach, and govern. This leadership structure was derived from the Jewish pattern of elders governing both the city and the synagogue. Paul not only appoints elders, but commands Titus to appoint them as well. Peter also recognizes the appointment, presence, and responsibility of elders within local congregations.

Paul used the medium of writing to instruct and encourage various congregations. These letters were to be read within a local church and some of these letters were to be exchanged with other congregations. However, the majority of instruction in a local church was to come through the on-site teaching elders who were men selected for their integrity and ability. These men were to teach doctrine, refute error, and model lives of integrity that would be observed and imitated by those within the local congregation; keeping watch souls as those who would be required to give an account to God.

### **Supplement: A Theological Rationale Concerning the Development of Consistent, Congruent and Contextualized Sermons in Multi-Site Churches**

This supplement will provide a theological treatment of the practice of expositional preaching as the basis of enabling sermons to be consistent with scripture, congruent with the other campuses, and contextualized for the local audience.

#### **Consistent with Scripture**

The sermons in the Bible were consistent with the existing scriptures of the time. A sermon can be called Biblical if the content of the sermon is consistent with the idea of the text. This Biblical method of preaching is what has been defined by Haddon



Robinson as expository preaching. Expository preaching is “the communication of a Biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”<sup>233</sup>

John Stott likewise describes expository preaching in a similar way. According to Stott, exposition:

...refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor prizes open what appears to be what is closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted and unfolds what is tightly packed. The opposite is true of ‘imposition’, which is to impose on the text what is not there.<sup>234</sup>

Expository preaching can also be called *Biblical Preaching* for it not only communicates a Biblical concept, but it is a Biblical model of preaching. One such expositor is Ezra the scribe. After the wall was rebuilt in Jerusalem, Ezra was asked to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses before the assembly of men and women who were able to understand. After he opened the book of the Law and the people worshipped, “they read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Nehemiah 8:8).<sup>235</sup>

Further, Jesus demonstrated this teaching model on at least two occasions. Jesus read and proved from the scriptures that He is the promised Messiah of the Old

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<sup>233</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.

<sup>234</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 125-126. Stott goes on to say: “In expository preaching the biblical text is neither a convenient introduction to a sermon on a largely different theme, nor a convenient peg on which to hang a ragbag of miscellaneous thoughts, but a master which dictates and controls what is said.”

<sup>235</sup> Nehemiah 8:8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.



Testament. Luke records that after Jesus returned to Nazareth, he stood up and read the scroll of Isaiah, rolled up the scroll and applied the scripture specifically to Himself, in a way that only He could, and consequently applied a response of worship to everyone else.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, 19 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." 20 And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. (Luke 4:18-21)

On another occasion, Jesus is on the Emmaus road with His disciples following the resurrection. Jesus reveals to the unaware disciples that He is the messiah by sharing and applying the Old Testament revelations concerning His identity and purpose.

"Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).<sup>236</sup>

Expository preaching is also evident throughout the book of Acts. The early church featured a format of explaining and applying scripture as seen in the preaching ministry of Phillip and Apollos. After the persecution of Stephen, Phillip is led by the Spirit to an Ethiopian eunuch reading a scroll of Isaiah in a chariot.<sup>237</sup> Phillip and the man read the scripture together. Afterward, Phillip "began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:35).<sup>238</sup> Just as Jesus provided interpretation on the Emmaus road, so Phillip explains the Isaiah passage being read to

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<sup>236</sup> Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>237</sup> Acts 8:26-40.

<sup>238</sup> Acts 8:35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.



demonstrate to the eunuch that Jesus is the Messiah.<sup>239</sup> The scripture is then understood and applied as the eunuch asks Phillip if he may be baptized.<sup>240</sup>

While in Ephesus, Apollos, a man with a “thorough knowledge of the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24)<sup>241</sup> was a great help to those who believed with his exposition for he “vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18:28).<sup>242</sup> Though Apollos was a gifted teacher, he was misguided at first.<sup>243</sup> However, after being taught properly, he was highly effective because both in his teaching within the church and his proclamation outside of it, he argued cogently that Jesus was the Messiah the scriptures spoke of.<sup>244</sup>

This pattern of preaching can be modeled as well by local pastors. Pastors can best strengthen their congregation by a diet of consistent expository preaching. The practice of expositional preaching can be an enormous benefit to a local congregation. Christopher Ash lists seven benefits of consecutive expository preaching.<sup>245</sup> According to Ash, consecutive expository preaching:

1. Safeguards God’s agenda against being hijacked by ours.
2. Makes it harder for us to abuse the Bible by reading it out of context.
3. Dilutes the selectivity of the preacher.
4. Keeps the content of the sermon fresh and surprising.
5. Makes for the variety in the style of the sermon.
6. Models good nourishing Bible reading for the ordinary Christian.

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<sup>239</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 163.

<sup>240</sup> Acts 8:36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”

<sup>241</sup> Luke 18:24 Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!

<sup>242</sup> Acts 18:24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

<sup>243</sup> Though Apollos was a gifted teacher, he needed the instruction from Priscilla and Aquila, who heard him and explained the way of God more accurately in Ephesus (Acts 18:25-26).

<sup>244</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 360-361.

<sup>245</sup> Christopher Ash, *The Priority of Preaching*. (London: Proclamation Trust Media, 2009), 107-122.



7. Helps the preacher to preach the whole Christ from the whole of scripture.

### **Congruent with One Another**

The New Testament does not describe any process of sermon composition, neither individually nor collectively. However congruency exists among the content and sermons throughout the New Testament. Messages<sup>246</sup> in the New Testament were consistent with each other. Though obviously not for weekly sermons, Paul and the church leaders did gather on at least one occasion for clarity on what is to be taught and by the apostles and the church.<sup>247</sup>

This example of a collaborated message is seen in Acts 15:1-35, where the apostles gathered to discuss a controversy that was started by unofficial representatives of the church who were distorting the relationship between the Law and the new Gentile believers. Jerusalem delegates, who felt a sense of deep brotherly love, gathered to discuss the matter, reached consensus and then used their status to set the record straight.<sup>248</sup> After agreement was reached on how to address the issue, they wrote a letter explaining how God led them in the process, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements."<sup>249</sup>

These leaders felt God spoke among their groups what was seeking His direction collectively. They believed that the Holy Spirit led them in this collaboration. F. F. Bruce contends that the gathered church leaders saw themselves as the vehicle for the

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<sup>246</sup> "Message" here refers to content and doctrine, not individual sermons.

<sup>247</sup> R. Alan Cole. *Galatians* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002. According to Cole, Paul does refer to a meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church in Galatians 2:2, There is some ambiguity as to whether this referred to the famine visit in Acts 11:27-30 or the Jerusalem council of Acts 15.

<sup>248</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 255.

<sup>249</sup> Acts 15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements.



Holy Spirit. “So conscious were the church leaders of being possessed and controlled by the Spirit that He was given prior mention of their decision.”<sup>250</sup>

Since God can speak collectively, as well as individually, it can be practical for local preachers to come together to discuss sermon content and preparation.<sup>251</sup> Haddon Robinson has noted that when the Holy Spirit speaks in the book of Acts, He most often does it within the community of believers rather than to an individual.<sup>252</sup>

The largest example of a message being both congruent and contextualized may be seen in the similarities and differences featured in the synoptic gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke each write a gospel that presents Jesus as the Son of God and the redeemer of humanity. Though scholarly disagreement exists as to the priority of certain manuscripts and the potential existence of additional sources,<sup>253</sup> one thing is for certain, each writer wrote an inerrant revelation under the power of the Holy Spirit that was consistent with the others and yet directed toward a specific audience.

Matthew clearly wanted to present Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. According to Carson and Moo, Matthew wanted to compose a gospel in which:

1. Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son of Man, and Immanuel, the one to whom the Old Testament law and prophets pointed.
2. Many Jews, especially Jewish leaders, failed to recognize Jesus for who He really was and were in danger if they continue in a state of disbelief and rejection.

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<sup>250</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 298.

<sup>251</sup> One may question whether this message consistent because they had collaborated together, or simply because they were uniquely under the superintending power of the Holy Spirit. One must not read too much into this. The Spirit can speak collectively as well as individually just as the Spirit may be silent collectively or individually. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:8, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.”

<sup>252</sup> Haddon W. Robinson. Preacher and Message class lecture, May, 2010.

<sup>253</sup> For more information concerning the composition and authenticity of the synoptic gospels, see D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).



3. The promised eschatological kingdom has already begun as demonstrated by the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus.
4. This messianic reign is continuing as Jews and Gentile submit to the authority of Jesus and become witnesses.
5. This messianic kingdom is not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes, but a foretaste of the consummated kingdom when Jesus returns.<sup>254</sup>

Carson and Moo also note that Mark probably wrote his gospel in Rome with a Roman audience in mind and wanted his readers to know that Jesus is the suffering servant of God.<sup>255</sup> Luke was written to a primarily Hellenistic audience demonstrated by the stated greeting and purpose.<sup>256</sup> Though Luke addressed his letter to a specific individual, it is likely that he had a larger reading audience in mind. Luke omits much of the synoptic content that relates to Jewish law (i.e. the controversy surrounding uncleanness in Mark 7:1-23). Luke also begins his genealogy with Adam instead of Abraham showing that Jesus was fully human and thus the messiah of all mankind.<sup>257</sup> In contrast with John, which contains no structural or syntactical unity with the other gospels, the synoptics demonstrate that a spoken or written message can be both congruent with each other and contextualized for their audience.

### **Contextualized for the Local Audience**

Personal compassion and local proclamation can create sermons to be much more contextualized. Contextualization arises not only from an understanding of scripture, but

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<sup>254</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 158.

<sup>255</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 182-186.

<sup>256</sup> Luke 1:1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

<sup>257</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 210-211.



the needs, joys, hurts and depravity of ones own heart. John Piper notes that Jonathan Edwards “did not get such a profound knowledge of the human soul from hobnobbing with the Northampton parishioners...Edwards’ insight into the human heart came from his thorough acquaintance with his own heart.”<sup>258</sup>

A preacher can contextualize messages by becoming intimately familiar with both the scriptures and ones own heart. However, awareness of the audience can help the preacher to make each listener feel that he is talking directly to them. By having local preachers proclaiming the word, contextualization and application can be directed toward the present audience. By contextualizing , sermons, can be applied specifically to the present audience.

Contextualization is seen throughout the sermons in Acts, where every message is audience oriented.<sup>259</sup> Paul contextualized his sermons<sup>260</sup> by establishing common ground with people culturally, ethnically, or politically and moved toward direct application. According to Jay Adams, “there seems to be some indication that at Antioch his target was especially the ‘God fearers’ (not exclusively, of course); in Athens, perhaps the Stoics (he quotes from two of their poets), and in Caesarea, it is almost certain that the target was Agrippa.”<sup>261</sup> Paul’s message was always “Christ Crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23)<sup>262</sup> yet he contextualized this message in order to connect with his diverse audiences. If sermons are going to be direct and relevant, a live preacher must be able to contextualize and apply a Christ-centered message that is consistent with the text.

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<sup>258</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 96.

<sup>259</sup> Haddon Robinson, class lecture, May 24, 2010.

<sup>260</sup> See Acts 13:13-43; 14:6-16; 17:16-34; 20:16-38; 21:27-22:22 and 25:13-26:32.

<sup>261</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Studies in Preaching: Audience Adaptations in the Sermons and Speeches of Paul* (USA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976), 64.

<sup>262</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.



## **Summary**

The majority of preaching in the scripture was expositional and delivered by a local, teaching elder. Prophets and teachers read, explained, and applied the meaning of scripture first to themselves and then to their audiences. Thus, the messages were consistent, as they were an explanation and application of existing scripture. Collective and congruent messages were delivered because synoptic gospel writers as well as the church leaders wrote as led by the Spirit as in Acts 15. In addition to this, the early church leaders sent and received circular letters. Finally, messages were contextualized because local teaching pastors had the ability and authority to preach and apply scripture for their local venue.



## CHAPTER THREE

### A THEORETICAL RATIONALE FOR PREACHING WITHIN MULTI-SITE CHURCHES

Chapter Three will explore the following topics: the rhetorical rationale for the existence of multi-site churches, the advantages and disadvantages of multi-site ministry, and the primary preaching formats used within these churches. This chapter will also survey the four preaching models used in multi-site churches that feature live, on-site preaching and describe the sermon composition process of multi-site teaching teams. The review of the literature and the synthesis of interviews conducted with multi-site church leaders will demonstrate how teaching teams from multi-site churches compose sermons that are consistent with the Biblical text, congruent with one another and contextualized for each local venue.

Although a great deal of information in this section is referenced from books, journals, and online articles, the majority of research was gathered from interviews with leaders from multi-site churches that feature predominantly live on-site teachers. In the book entitled *A Multi-Site Road Trip*, Bird, Ligon and Surratt identify several multi-site churches that offer live on-site teaching. Many of these churches were contacted by this author, as well as multi-site churches not mentioned in the book that also offer live, on-site teaching for interviews.<sup>263</sup> A lead pastor, executive pastor, or site pastor was interviewed from each church that participated. Most interviews were conducted by phone between January-May, 2010. The author also conducted site visits, in-person

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<sup>263</sup> Although, Seacoast Church primarily features video delivered sermons at extension campuses, this church was selected because of its' pioneering role in multi-site ministry.



interviews and participated in staff meetings at Stillwater Church and Ginghamburg Church in Dayton, Ohio.

### **Realities of Multi-Site Churches**

Multi-site church is a concept that is transforming the way many American churches approach ministry. Bird, Ligon and Surratt estimated that 2,000 North American churches are considered multi-site congregations with more than five million worshippers, or 10% of Protestants attending a multi-site church.<sup>264</sup> Although a few churches have been experimenting with the concept of multi-campus ministry for decades, the majority of churches that offer multi-site services have embraced and employed this model within the previous ten years. Although barely a decade old, the multi-campus strategy is practiced by sixty-seven of the one hundred largest churches in America. In addition, fifty-eight of America's one hundred fastest growing churches are multi-site.<sup>265</sup> Timm Boyle, among others, believes that the day is fast approaching when the majority of churches will be part of the multi-site strategy.<sup>266</sup>

Multi-site churches are seeing success among diverse congregations and communities. The multi-site model is working at Willow Creek Church in majority white communities around Chicagoland. It is also working at Eddie Long's New Birth Missionary Baptist Church campuses in Georgia and North Carolina, with three predominantly African American sites. The eleven sites of New Life Community

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<sup>264</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 17.

<sup>265</sup> Outreach Magazine, 100 Largest and Fastest Growing Churches in America, 34-44.

<sup>266</sup> Timm Boyle, The New Normal: "The Multi-site Church Phenomenon is Coming to a Neighborhood Near You," Willow Magazine, Spring 2008.  
<http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN01I22008> (accessed December 8, 2009).



Church, two of which are in Spanish, in Chicago and the five multi-ethnic sites of Mosaic in the Los Angeles area are seeing similar growth.<sup>267</sup>

## Definitions

Before an evaluation of multi-site ministry can occur, it must be defined.

According to Bird, Ligon and Surratt, “A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations-different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership and board.”<sup>268</sup> Elmer Towns expands that definition further to include services at prisons, nursing homes, mission Sunday schools, and /or chapels.<sup>269</sup> Scott McConnell limits “multi-site” to the establishment of a site somewhere other than the church’s current location.<sup>270</sup> It becomes increasingly difficult to define the movement precisely since so many of its practitioners define it differently.<sup>271</sup>

## A Survey of Multi-Site Churches

There are many advantages for churches to open additional campuses and begin worshiping in multiple locations. However, the novelty of this model is causing church

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<sup>267</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 50.

<sup>268</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 18.

<sup>269</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 211.

<sup>270</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 17.

<sup>271</sup> Throughout this chapter, the words “multi-site,” multi-venue” and “multi-campus” will be used often. Multi-site and multi-venue churches will be used to describe churches holding services in different locations, on or off the same campus, and may often be used interchangeably. Multi-campus churches will refer exclusively to churches that hold services that meet on locations separate from the original campus.



leaders to evaluate the benefits and consequences of this movement as they navigate these areas together.

### **Advantages of Multi-Site Ministry**

Many church leaders have embraced the concept of multi-site ministry because it enables the church to be good stewards of the resources, talent, pastoral visibility, experiences and potential opportunities of the current ministry.

#### **Stewardship of Resources**

The option of offering multiple campuses can allow churches to maximize impact, while minimizing much of the cost associated with starting a church from scratch. Bird, Ligon, and Surratt note how this model improves a church's stewardship of funds and resources.<sup>272</sup> By adding additional campuses, churches are able to free themselves from many of the costs associated with having to build larger venues to hold services and ministry programs. Freedom from the constraints of having to build larger sanctuaries and the attention that these projects require is one reason that John Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis has found multi-site to be so attractive.<sup>273</sup>

In an interview on NPR's *All Things Considered*, Chapel Tucker noted that, "Many of the large mega-churches are beginning to spin off satellite or branch campuses around the city or area as a way to reach their diverse populations but also so they don't

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<sup>272</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>273</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoining.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).



have to continue to invest in larger and larger buildings.”<sup>274</sup> This multi-site option is especially attractive to churches willing to feature a video format of teaching. Bird, Ligon and Surratt calculate that a church can establish additional campuses without much of the overhead and start-up costs that would be required for an independent church plant, since video technology costs only 5% of the estimated cost of building additional facilities.<sup>275</sup>

### Stewardship of Personnel

Bob Smietana notes that multi-site churches are not only able to share financial resources they are able to share staff and the creativity capital of a team that is focused on a single vision, yet looking at it from different perspectives.<sup>276</sup>

Financial resources can also be maximized by keeping operations centralized and hiring specialists. Because operations are centralized, much of the administrative time and costs remain consistent in spite of the addition of new campuses. Ferguson found that one HR person, one website, one bulletin, one constitution at the main campus can serve all the campuses.<sup>277</sup> Thom Rainer notes that a church can employ one administrative team to serve all campuses since the church only needs one administrator, one set of financial records, one accountant and one small group structure.<sup>278</sup>

A multi-site structure not only leverages the resources and expertise of the existing campus(s), it allows the new location to start with a specialist. Ferguson writes that most church plants hire a dilettante to be the launch pastor, a hardworking generalist

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<sup>274</sup> Capell Tucker, *All Things Considered*, NPR, July 18, 2005.

<sup>275</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 13.

<sup>276</sup> Bob Smietana, “High-Tech Circuit Riders,” *Christianity Today*, September 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/september/24.60.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).

<sup>277</sup> Dave Ferguson, “The Multi-Site Church,” *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 81-84.

<sup>278</sup> Thom Rainer, “One Church, Two Locations,” *Outreach* 4, no. 4 (July/August 2005).



that is average at best at facilitating children's ministry, leading small groups, doing visitation, securing space, marketing the new ministry, overseeing youth ministry, leading worship, developing leadership teams, printing bulletins, raising funds, and if anything is left, preaching. Ferguson's multi-site model already has specialists in place at the launching site that can equip the launch team and provide church-wide system. This allows the site pastor to focus on making the new campus incarnational in the community, leadership development and if necessary, sermon preparation.<sup>279</sup>

### Extending Their Reach

Churches that worship at multiple campuses can also extend their evangelistic reach. Multi-site ministry allows churches to expand into communities and niches they would otherwise have a difficult time reaching without leaving the community they are currently serving. Churches can take their ministries and membership into communities that they want to reach. Smietana reports that the staff at Willow Creek Church discovered some years ago that people will generally not drive more than 30 minutes to come to services on a consistent basis. In order to serve those beyond a half hour drive, they decided to establish campuses in additional communities.<sup>280</sup> Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis opened a campus in the northern suburbs of the city so that those who are considered "north" people can now more naturally invite neighbors to go with them to (the nearby) church.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Dave Ferguson, "The Multi-Site Church," *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 81-84.

<sup>280</sup> Bob Smietana, "High-Tech Circuit Riders," *Christianity Today*, September 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/september/24.60.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).

<sup>281</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoining.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).



The closer proximity of site campuses also makes it much easier for attendees to get involved in ministry. According to Dave Ferguson, the ministry opportunities within new campuses and much shorter commutes eliminate excuses and make ministry more servant-friendly.<sup>282</sup> Bird, Ligon and Surratt describe the location benefits of multi-campus by assisting members in helping reach friends and family unwilling to travel a great distance to church and enabling a church to extend itself into niches like a cancer ward or an office complex.<sup>283</sup>

### Local Personalization

The leadership team of Redeemer Presbyterian in New York City has found that offering multiple campuses can help smaller services that are able to feature local personalization.

The development of Redeemer's multi-site model has taken shape with an East Side location for AM & PM congregations and two separate West Side sites for a morning and evening congregation. The goal of this decentralization is to have smaller, more community-based congregations that serve the local neighborhood and are welcoming to those exploring the truth of the Gospel.<sup>284</sup>

Offering multiple campuses also allows churches to respond to demographic changes. Because communities grow, populations move, and neighborhoods change, churches often ask themselves if they should move to where the population is growing and, oftentimes, where many members have relocated. Or should they stay in the existing structure in order to remain missional to the current community. The multi-site

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<sup>282</sup> Dave Ferguson, "The Multi-Site Church," *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 81-84.

<sup>283</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>284</sup> Redeemer's History, [http://www.redeemer.com/about\\_us/vision\\_and\\_values/history.html](http://www.redeemer.com/about_us/vision_and_values/history.html) (accessed January 17, 2010).



model not only allows a church to remain committed to its current community, while positioning itself for strategic growth, it allows the ministry at each campus to be contextualized for who each campus is best positioned to reach. Ferguson observes that St. Paul Church in Aurora, IL was able to open a location on the west side of town that was growing while restructuring ministry at its original site in order to be more intentionally focused on the growing Latino neighborhood in which the church resides.<sup>285</sup>

### A Climate for Diversity

The multi-site model can accelerate the climate for diversity, creativity, and innovation in ministry.<sup>286</sup> Ministries are able to be incarnational by contextualizing ministries to meet the unique interest of those who live within diverse communities. Bird, Ligon and Surratt note that an otherwise homogeneous congregation can establish an urban site with a gospel flavor, offer services in Spanish in Latino communities and feature services with creative elements in a gentrified artistic community.<sup>287</sup> According to Smietana, Bayside Church pastored by Ray Johnson, has a main campus in Granite Bay, California, which serves a predominately white community with a median household income of over \$100,000. Yet they also have a campus in South Sacramento that serves a multi-racial community with a median income of \$35,000 that is pastored by Sherwood Carthen, an African-American pastor and chaplain of the Sacramento Kings.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Dave Ferguson, "The Multi-Site Church," *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 81-84.

<sup>286</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>287</sup> Bird, Warren; Ligon, Greg and Surratt, Geoff. *A Multi-Site Road Trip. Exploring the New Normal*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

<sup>288</sup> Bob Smietana, "High-Tech Circuit Riders," *Christianity Today*, September 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/september/24.60.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).



By offering multiple campuses, a church is able to reach into new communities without abandoning their current location and community. This model of smaller sending communities helps a church to “reverse the flow,” says Tim Keller. The vision of Keller is that, “Instead of drawing people to the church, (we) take the church into the world.”<sup>289</sup> Establishing a suburban extension also gave Bethlehem Baptist a new mission field. Rather than distracting from their commitment to urban ministry, the north extension opened the door to add a suburban mission field in addition to their urban and international mission’s emphases.<sup>290</sup>

### A Proven Track Record

Many multi-site church leaders hold that their model of ministry actually offers offers a greater chance for success than traditional church planting does. Serving in multi-site situations models and trains people for church planting elsewhere.<sup>291</sup> J. D. Greear, the lead pastor of the Summit Church with multiple campuses in the Raleigh-Durham area, writes: “We have found that the multi-site strategy does not in any way eclipse church planting. In fact, it provides an opportunity to determine who has the right gift set to plant and pastor. As it stands now, new churches fail more than half the time. Wouldn’t it be helpful to have an in-between stage in which leadership abilities can be tested?”<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Cathy Lynn Grossman, “Multi-site churches mean pastors can reach thousands,” *USA Today*, December 16, 2009, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-12-17-1Amultichurches17\\_CV\\_N.htm?csp=usat.me&POE=click-refer](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-12-17-1Amultichurches17_CV_N.htm?csp=usat.me&POE=click-refer), (accessed December 20, 2009).

<sup>290</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>291</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>292</sup> J D Greear “A Pastor Defends Multi-Site Church” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2474264,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2474264,00.html) (Accessed January 17, 2010).



## A Trusted Brand

According to Thom Rainer, one reason that this model appears to be more successful than traditional church planting is that the “DNA” and “brand” of the original campus is more easily reproduced. The multi-site approach allows the “DNA” of an effective church to be reproduced at other sites. Unfortunately, the DNA of a church is usually lost in an autonomous church plant.<sup>293</sup> Ferguson states that this phenomenon is similar to a new store or a franchise that moves into another community; the multi-site church is able to capitalize on the reputation of its brand, while at the same time having the excitement that goes along with a store or restaurant opening.<sup>294</sup>

## Addition by Subtraction

In addition to all of these outreach benefits to opening existing campuses, there are compelling reasons that directly affect the existing site and congregations. Adding additional sites not only causes people to take risks for Christ’s sake and trust the mercy and power of God,<sup>295</sup> but it also equips more leaders for ministry.<sup>296</sup> Ferguson noticed that people who are not only needed to serve, but also equipped by highly functioning coaches, are more likely to stick around.<sup>297</sup> This also creates a pipeline for the

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<sup>293</sup> Thom Rainer, “One Church, Two Locations,” *Outreach* 4, no. 4 (July/August 2005).

<sup>294</sup> Dave Ferguson, “The Multi-Site Church,” *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 81-84.

<sup>295</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church,  
<http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>296</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church,  
<http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>297</sup> Dave Ferguson, “The Multi-Site Church,” *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 83-84.



development of emerging leaders and future staff<sup>298</sup> and can broaden the base of missionary sending;<sup>299</sup>

### Having Your Cake and Eating It Too

Offering multiple sites gives people many of the advantages of both large churches and smaller churches. Smietana writes that many of the options and quality of a large church can be enjoyed by still retaining the intimacy of smaller church.<sup>300</sup>

Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill believes that the video venues are actually more successful at making disciples. "We find that giving, small group participation, church membership, and serving is higher at the video campuses than where I preach live"<sup>301</sup>

### A Chance to Improve

Finally, according to Ferguson, adding sites also can improve quality in each campus because it forces churches to rethink how to do children's ministry, creative arts, small groups, worship, etc. each time a campus is launched.<sup>302</sup> Christian Community Church was able to launch the second site with the amount of excellence that it took the original site eight years to achieve. In addition to this, the leadership at the new site often found ways, such as in hospitality, to make improvements to the existing programs,

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<sup>298</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>299</sup> "Going Without Going," Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>300</sup> Bob Smietana, "High-Tech Circuit Riders," Christianity Today, September 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/september/24.60.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).

<sup>301</sup> "Mark Dever, Mark Driscoll and James McDonald on Multi-Site." <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/09/28/dever-driscoll-and-macdonald-on-multi-site/> (accessed October 25, 2010).

<sup>302</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Reproducing Church: Lessons We've Learned About How to Multiply Groups, Services, Sites and Churches*. <http://www.newthing.org/news/articles/multisite/82-the-reproducing-church> (accessed December 21, 2009).



improvements that were actually adopted by the original site.<sup>303</sup> Multi-site ministry allows churches to reach new communities, refine ministries and increase service in order to see a more effective degree of success at the new sites with only a fraction of the start up cost of a church plant.

### **Disadvantages of Multi-site Ministry**

In spite of all the advantages of multi-site ministry, there are many criticisms and unanswered questions as well that stem from its' novelty, use of technology and leadership structures.

#### **An Absence of Evaluation**

In spite of all the advantages that multiple sites offer, there are also many criticisms as well. The first major criticism of multi-site churches is that their presence has exploded overnight without time to evaluate the theology or pragmatic consequences of this new model. Ferguson warns that churches can embrace this model in order to grow without asking the hard questions. Josh Hammitt believes that before seeking to expand this model, church leaders must build upon the previous work of making the theological, exegetical, and ecclesiological rationale for multi-campus ministry.<sup>304</sup>

One reason that churches are so quick to embrace this model without asking these hard questions is due to the enormous growth that adding multiple sites seem to promise. Does the promise of attracting more attendees necessitate expansion without reflection

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<sup>303</sup> Dave Ferguson, "The Multi-Site Church," *Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 81-84.

<sup>304</sup> John Hammitt. "The Multi-Site Church Revolution, A Book Review."

[http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2301916,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2301916,00.html) (accessed January 7, 2010).



and evaluation? Thomas White, who is highly critical of multi-site churches, fears “*that the masses filling those multiple locations do not constitute healthy assemblies.*”<sup>305</sup>

### An Absence of Local Leadership

Because multi-site churches are led by pastors and elder boards at the original site, many claim that local sites are not operating with the congregational authority or pastoral oversight that is demonstrated in scripture. Thomas White has said that “in Paul’s letters he upheld congregational authority. In 1 Corinthians 5:4 and 5:13 Paul upholds the necessity of congregational action and governance, which I do not see in the multi-site methodology”.<sup>306</sup> For example, although Community Christian has eleven campuses, it is led by the team of only eight elders called the Leadership Commission that deals with direction, discipline and doctrine.<sup>307</sup> At nearby New Life Community Church, a 14 member pastoral team serves as elders, while each campus also has 5-6 local elders who care for the needs of those in that campus.<sup>308</sup>

### What Makes a Church a Church?<sup>309</sup>

Mark Dever believes that “multi-site church” is a contradiction of terms. He and Paul Alexander, note that the word “church” (ἐκκλησία) in the New Testament

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<sup>305</sup> Thomas White “Nine Reasons I Don’t Like Multi-Site Churches” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>306</sup> Thomas White “Nine Reasons I Don’t Like Multi-Site Churches” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>307</sup> “Community Christian Church: Presenting a Common Theme,” Willow Magazine, Spring 2008 <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN03I22008> (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>308</sup> “New Life Community Church: Reflecting the Community” Willow Magazine, Spring 2008 <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN04I22008> (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>309</sup> See Chapter 2 for an elaboration on the entomology of church and markers of local church ministry.



primarily meant an “assembly.” It was used to describe a gathering where “all the believers were together” and “everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts” (Acts 2:44, 46).<sup>310</sup> Thus to have multiple services and multiple sites would be to actually have multiple churches.

In spite of this, Dever explains that multiple services and multiple campuses are sometimes necessary based on space and geographic constraints:

It was the early 1990's. I was the associate pastor. We had a thriving congregation in the middle of the city, but our building was full, packed with hundreds of college students. At the same time, we had concentrations of members both in the north and the south of our city. So we came up with an innovative idea. We would have three congregations, but one church.

How did we remain one church? We maintained one name, one budget, one membership role, one set of elders, one evening service, and united members meetings. On Sunday mornings, however, the north and south congregations would meet at 9:30 while the main central congregation would meet at 10:30. This allowed the preacher at either the North or South congregation to preach, and then to sprint across town to the central congregation, arriving just after the singing and in time for the sermon.<sup>311</sup>

### Neglected Campuses

A lack of autonomous freedom and limited representation may cause one site to be highlighted above the other venues. This especially can happen when churches make one campus the emphasis and consistently refer to it as the “main campus,” considering the other venues as secondary, overflow or extension-sites.<sup>312</sup> In order to discourage this trend Community Christian Church never refers to one site as the “main campus” in order

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<sup>310</sup> Paul Alexander and Mark Dever, *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 87. For more information on the use of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament see Chapter 2.

<sup>311</sup> Mark Dever *Pastored a Multi-Site Church: The New 9Marks eJournal on Multi-Site Churches* <http://owenstrachan.com/2009/05/02/mark-dever-pastored-a-multi-site-church-the-new-9marks-ejournal-on-multi-site-churches/> (accessed September 15, 2010).

<sup>312</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 12.



to be able to treat all its locations equally. They want attendees to have the same experience no matter which campus they attend.<sup>313</sup>

### I Want My MTV: Embracing Consumerism

Although one appeal of multi-site ministry is the increase of options and quality, too many options can appeal to a consumerism mindset. Although a strong proponent of multi-site ministry, J. D. Greear sympathizes with many of the concerns of those critical to the movement. *“Many multi-site environments encourage consumerism, foster anonymity, are built on a cult of personality, and depend more on man's wisdom than God's wisdom.”*<sup>314</sup>

Speaking specifically to video-venues, White describes how the appeal to consumerism and marketing is affecting the traditional view of church and undermining the traditional role of the church family.

With varying degrees of guilt, the multi-site method encourages consumerism. In the best scenarios, screens display messages from the most gifted communicators. Most locations have campus pastors who are theologically sound or they would not have been hired. They must be able to teach or they do not fit the Biblical qualifications (1 Tim. 3:2). They may not, however, communicate as effectively or in such an entertaining manner as the video preacher. Perceptive audiences get the message when the more entertaining speaker has the spotlight.<sup>315</sup>

In a worse scenario, North Coast Church offers multiple styles with the same teaching in the same facility. The options include “North Coast Live” with a human preacher, “video café” with Starbucks coffee and pastries, “the edge” with

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<sup>313</sup> “Community Christian Church: Presenting a Common Theme,” Willow Magazine, Spring 2008 <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN03I22008> (accessed December 8, 2009). This similar experience is not simply across sites, but all ministries that may include the main auditorium, children or youth.

<sup>314</sup> J D Greear “A Pastor Defends Multi-Site Church” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2474264,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2474264,00.html) (Accessed January 17, 2010).

<sup>315</sup> Thomas White “Nine Reasons I Don’t Like Multi-Site Churches” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CIID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010).



large subwoofers, “country Gospel” with bluegrass worship, “frontlines” with a military focus and acoustic worship, and “traditions” with a mix of classic hymns and old favorites. A family may arrive in one car and never see each other until they return to the car.<sup>316</sup>

I fear that catering to worship styles and atmosphere preferences create purveyors of religious products serving spiritual consumers without creating substantive life change. This can lead to internet churches like LifeChurch.TV with a virtual campus in SecondLife.com. Parishioners never leave their homes. They simply turn on computers to watch a different screen, experiencing virtual community through discussion boards, contributing offerings through PayPal, and taking communion with saltine crackers and Kool-Aid.<sup>317</sup>

## Not a Cure All

Many church leaders have also make the mistake of believing that embracing multi-site ministry will bring growth to a dying church or health to an unhealthy congregation. When a church is not showing signs of growth or a passion for sharing the gospel or equipping people for ministry, then going multi-site will not only fail to compensate for those weaknesses, it will magnify them.<sup>318</sup> Multi-site ministry only makes sense when a church currently possesses evangelistic fervor, is growing in the number of leaders, and is seizing ministry opportunities and already experiencing growth.<sup>319</sup> McConnell advises that only when a church sees the movement of God in unanimity among leaders, a strong lead pastor, a solid core group, a fertile location, systems and structures in place, and the necessary finances should it consider opening another location.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Thomas White “Nine Reasons I Don’t Like Multi-Site Churches” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CHID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CHID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>317</sup> Thomas White “Nine Reasons I Don’t Like Multi-Site Churches” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CHID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CHID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>318</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 14.

<sup>319</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 13.

<sup>320</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 17.



## **A Critique of Video Delivered Preaching**

The most hotly-debated issue concerning the development of multi-campus churches involves the use of sermons that are presented via live or tape-delayed video presentations. This not only creates significant opportunities, is also raises critical questions that can be a concern to the church.

### **Advantages of Video Venues**

With the ease and affordability of technology, churches can bring ministry into almost any venue with the flip of the switch and the dimming of the house lights. Sermons can be delivered limitlessly; no longer hindered by time, space and distance restraints. This can be enormously beneficial to local ministries for a number of reasons.

#### **It Just Plugs Right In**

According to Geoff Surratt of Seacoast Church, video preaching may not only be a consistently Biblical approach,<sup>321</sup> a video format is easier to adapt. By offering video-based sermons, new sites can be established with greater excellence at lower costs. Seacoast Church features video preaching in all of its thirteen venues with sermons preached by the four people that are on the teaching team. Since site pastors preach only 4-5 times per year they are able to spend their energy on leadership, shepherding and evangelism.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 93-94. According to Surratt, the content of the word that is important, not the medium through which it is delivered.

<sup>322</sup> Geoff Surratt, interviewed by author, January 7, 2010.



## Leveraging a Preacher

Secondly, the use of media can leverage the influence of gifted pastor. When John Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church in downtown Minneapolis faced landlocked issues and needed to add another site, they pursued multi-site options by using other preachers at the extension-site, but as they indicated, this "did not seem to fit with the unique calling of God on John's life."<sup>323</sup>

Video-delivered preaching allows the influence and gifts that a particular preacher has to be extended to the additional venues without exhausting ministry resources and attention. The use of video allowed Piper's preaching content to be uninterrupted when the extension campus was added. He was able to continue preaching through Romans unhindered at both sites by preaching downtown one week and at the North Extension-site the following week. The message was simply transmitted by video to the site where he was not preaching on a Sunday morning.<sup>324</sup>

## A Consistent Message

Additionally, video sermons ensure that a consistent message and vision is being communicated across all campuses. Larry Osborne of North Coast Church describes the benefits of using video-based preaching to communicate a common message across sites. The vision and ministry philosophy of North Coast is "...communicated as the scriptures are taught. It's the communicator that sets the tone for the values and the way people

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<sup>323</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>324</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).



think about church...they hear exactly the same message. So we haven't had any sense of kind of becoming two different churches at all. I mean literally zero."<sup>325</sup>

## **Disadvantages of Video Venues**

However, for each problem that video-driven preaching appears to solve, another set of critical issues stem from these solutions.

### **Talking Heads**

Since the greatest advantage of video projection involves the magnification of the senior pastor's influence, the greatest disadvantage of this model may be seen in an undue reliance on the gifts or personality of this pastor. In fact, the leadership team at Bethlehem Baptist wrote to their congregation, "Clearly, video preaching is not ideal as it creates undue dependence on the senior pastor."<sup>326</sup> The pastor can very easily move from being a live, personal teacher to just another distant, detached celebrity.

Eddie Gibbs, professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary is concerned about this disconnect between the "virtual preacher" and the congregation. Gibbs believes that video removes the preacher from the community of believers and does not allow dialog among the community. In addition to that, it turns the preacher into a celebrity and the sermon into canned, generic spiritual information.<sup>327</sup>

James McDonald, senior pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel has said,

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<sup>325</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 204.

<sup>326</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>327</sup> Bob Smietana, "High-Tech Circuit Riders," *Christianity Today*, September 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/september/24.60.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).



Personally, it has been a struggle to adjust to the diminishment of my role in shepherding a flock. I love the people that I am preaching to and frankly there is something unsatisfying and not authentic about rushing away from the people that you just poured your heart out to so you can make it to another service at another site. It is also a challenge to feel like a pastor in a church that you never see and that only sees you on video.<sup>328</sup>

### Remaining on the Bench

Additionally, offering video could actually hinder the development of emerging preachers within congregations. According to McDonald,

Multi-site has a lot of merit and we have done it, but it is also important that it does not diminish the hard work of reproducing ourselves in the lives of others. Some people are uniquely gifted to preach, but I really believe that the principles of communicating God's Word are transferable to other gifted people. We have to be careful when we are perpetuating satellites that we are not really saying, 'It is all reproducible except me.' That would be an abdication of our responsibility to the harder work of raising up others.<sup>329</sup>

Bob Hyatt, lead pastor of Evergreen Community Church in Portland, a nondenominational church that meets in pubs has been especially outspoken about the video format. "Leaders start saying, 'Bring me in, and I will turn this around [with video feeds],' and I don't see that model as good ecclesiology," Hyatt says. The reliance on the main pastor discourages more people from testing their teaching gifts, Hyatt believes "Video venues have the unintended consequences of killing teaching and the gift of preaching."<sup>330</sup>

This is one reason why Stillwater Church in Dayton, Ohio features live preaching by its campus pastors in all three of its locations. Lead Pastor Duane Anders feels that

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<sup>328</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 22.

<sup>329</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 22.

<sup>330</sup> Sarah Pulliam, "The Art of Cyber Church," *Christianity Today*, September 2009, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/september/29.50.html?start=1> (Accessed January 17, 2010).



reliance on video prevents pastors from training new pastors. Anders wants to be intentional about not tying his identity to each of the campuses: “Although having on-site pastors is more expensive in terms of both time and money, the lead pastor must grow leaders as we add campuses.”<sup>331</sup>

### Distinctively Demographic

According to site pastor Cliff Tademan of Christ the King Church, experience has shown video venues seem to work best in suburban communities. “Small towns and rural communities prefer the relational aspect of a live teacher.”<sup>332</sup> Therefore, Christ the King Church prefers using primarily live teachers at each of its’ rural and urban campuses although they still remain open to video venues. Tademan noted that Mars Hill, the multi-site mega church pastored by Mark Driscoll in nearby Seattle, tried to have live on-site teachers, yet it did not work so they went video.<sup>333</sup>

John Palmieri, site pastor of the Melrose Park campus of Chicago’s New Life Community Church tried video format, but said it did not work for them either. The staff of New Life church found that those in the urban neighborhoods they were attempting to reach resonated better with an on-site teacher.<sup>334</sup> Mike Slaughter, lead pastor from Ginghamburg Church in Dayton has noted that 74% of Americans live in urban communities. According to Slaughter, “People in urban communities need a live preacher.”<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Duane Anders, interviewed by author, January 9, 2010.

<sup>332</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010.

<sup>333</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010.

<sup>334</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.

<sup>335</sup> Mike Slaughter, interviewed by author, January 20, 2010.



Though open to video, Shelter Rock Church of suburban New York City continues to use live teachers the vast majority of the time at each of its three campuses. According to Jerry Sullivan, the site pastor of the Syosset Campus, “The demographic makeup of those unchurched in our community connect more with a live person. I am sure that video will catch on, just not yet.”<sup>336</sup>

### Unanswered Questions

Finally, multi-site churches may not have considered their succession strategy with the retirement or “ratings drop” of the senior pastor. Thomas White believes there are many questions that video-based churches are ignoring or not addressing.

Ominous questions loom on the horizon. What happens when this generation’s gifted communicators leave? When they retire or pass to heaven, will these franchised churches of today lead to the disenfranchised religious of tomorrow? Will these locations stand vacant symbolizing a failed religious experiment? What if one location wants to call its own live preacher? Will that be allowed or does the founding assembly own the property and make the decisions? Could a remote location choose to begin piping in a new rising star with no connection to the current branches?<sup>337</sup>

This is one reason why John Palmieri of New Life Community Church, states, “We also don’t want to build a church on personality. Our church would still function if we lost the senior pastor.”<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Jerry O’Sullivan, interviewed by author, May 12, 2010.

<sup>337</sup> Thomas White “Nine Reasons I Don’t Like Multi-Site Churches” [http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526\\_CHID598014\\_CHID2474344,00.html](http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CHID2474344,00.html) (Accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>338</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.



## **The Opportunities of Live, On-site Preaching**

By offering appropriate on-site preaching, multi-site churches are still able to provide the excellence they strive for, train and encourage preachers, and present consistent messages to the various venues.

### **Teachable Moments**

Some church leaders are viewing multi-site ministry as an opportunity to develop less experienced preachers. Although Erwin McManus is considered by many to be one of the most gifted communicators of this generation and could easily fill up multiple video sites, he has chosen to offer on-site teaching in all of Mosaic's venues. "We've chosen an on-site teaching approach, maybe because we're in the capital of film, television, and video. My personal dream is to raise up the next generation of great communicators. Certainly Los Angeles needs it; I think even the whole world needs it too."<sup>339</sup>

According to Eric Bryant, Navigator/Executive pastor at Mosaic, "We tried video in 2001-2002, but it just did not translate. Erwin's desire is to raise up the next generation of great communicators." This model enables Mosaic to train preachers in smaller venues. "Of the 2,500 people who worship at Mosaic on a weekend, three gatherings see 1,800 of the attendees. That leaves the other five gatherings seeing a

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<sup>339</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 8.



combined 700 people. Most gatherings are small. We believe that if a guy is able to speak to 50 people, one day he can be able to speak to 1,000.”<sup>340</sup>

Some churches that attempt to offer live, on-site preaching are also using this as an opportunity to train pastors for succession. Bethlehem Baptist is using the weeks when John Piper is out of the pulpit to provide the opportunity for two pulpits to be filled in the pastor’s absence.<sup>341</sup> Succession is also much easier in churches like Redeemer Presbyterian, where Tim Keller preaches live at each site. The plan after Keller retires from Redeemer is for each campus to call its own pastor, and become their own church.<sup>342</sup> One church that is effective at moving from satellite campuses to church plants is New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, pastored by Wayne Cordeiro. This church planting model is designed so that the campus pastor preaches about 10% of the time during the first year. The campus pastor does teach during the midweek discipleship and leadership development time, where the opportunity to strengthen the core is much higher but the preaching expectations are lower. During the second year, this campus pastor preaches 40% of the time. By the third year, video delivered sermons are not permitted more than 30% of the time. Finally, by the fourth year, video is only permitted on special occasions.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>341</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>342</sup> Going Without Going, Bethlehem Baptist Church, <http://www.bbcmpls.org/goingwogoing.htm?PHPSESSID=ec2d84decf417313bbfaf48720c...> (accessed 8/26/2003).

<sup>343</sup> “Joining the Multi-Site Revolution” Willow Magazine, Spring 2008 <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN10I22008> (accessed December 8, 2009)



## **A Survey of Live Teaching Models at Multi-Site Churches**

There are at least four different models churches are using to provide live, on-site teaching. In his book *Multi-Site Churches*, McConnell describes the four ways that live-on-site teaching usually occurs: 1.) Fewer teaching pastors than sites, with the teaching pastor(s) preaching at all the locations on a given weekend 2.) A teaching pastor at each site who also is the site pastor 3.) A team of teaching pastors who may rotate between the sites 4.) A teaching pastor at each site in addition to a site pastor.<sup>344</sup> The first three formats are seeing success and will be explained below. This final method is possible, yet offered very infrequently and thus will not be addressed here.

The first format features fewer teaching pastors than sites, with the teaching pastor(s) preaching all the locations on a given weekend. In most cases, these are churches that feature the senior pastor preaching at all campuses. Tim Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian in New York City, Jeffrey Johnson at Eastern Star Baptist in Indianapolis, and Ralph West at The Church Without Walls in Houston all have at least three campuses and are seeing tremendous growth with this model. Each of these pastors preach at one location, travels to at least two other locations where he preaches the same sermon, and may return the original campus for a later sermon.

Although this model makes it easy from a personnel perspective, it can be very taxing on the preaching pastor. Mark Estep of Spring Baptist Church describes preaching three services at two campuses as such:

If a pastor is going to preach at both campuses, he has to understand how taxing it is going to be on him physically, because if you preach at one service, that is one

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<sup>344</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 78-79.



thing. If you preach two, you go into the second already a little tired. It is sort of exponential in its nature. By the time you have preached your third service, you are very tired going into it.<sup>345</sup>

A second format features a teaching pastor at each site who also is the site pastor. This model is being practiced by Stillwater and Ginghamburg churches in Dayton, Ohio; Mosaic Church in greater Los Angeles; the Healing Place church based out of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Christ the King Church, based out of Mount Vernon, WA.

At Healing Place Church, live teachers preach in many of its eleven sites.<sup>346</sup> Marc Clearly and Dan Ohlerking described the process as following the same sermon series, but not necessarily the same message, "Because it's how God speaks it through each speaker as they speak. But it is the same title, same topic, same video bumper, same graphics, all that."<sup>347</sup>

Finally, a church can offer live on-site teaching by having a team of teaching pastors who may rotate between the sites.<sup>348</sup> Valley Bible Fellowship is one example of churches that rotate teaching pastors among sites. Senior Pastor Ron Vietti and teaching pastor Jim Crews each prepare half of the sermons within a series. They each then preach the sermon at their Bakersfield, CA or Las Vegas, NV campus. Then they swap and preach the same sermon at the other campus on a following week. This works well because each campus is able to have live preaching, and the quality is increased as each

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<sup>345</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 82.

<sup>346</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 74.

<sup>347</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 83.

<sup>348</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 78-79.



pastor can maximize study and prep time because he only has to prepare half of the sermons.<sup>349</sup>

### **Foundations of Consistent, Congruent and Contextualized Sermons**

The literature and interviews identify four consistent patterns in developing teaching teams that preach consistent, congruent and contextualized messages. The following literature will show that ministry teams that are doing these successfully usually: 1.) are committed to assembling the right teams 2.) develop long term preaching calendars. 3.) have a consistent and disciplined planning process, and 4.) allow site pastors the freedom to contextualize the messages.

### **Building the Right Teams**

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins describes the process of building high-performance teams as the “First Who...Then What” mindset.<sup>350</sup> Collins likens building teams to getting the right people on the bus. Collins states that oftentimes, it is necessary to get the right people on the bus even before you know where it is going. If the right people are on the bus, the leader usually is satisfied with where the bus ends up. This is especially true in building teaching teams. If teams are built with the right members and in the right way, the process is enjoyable and productive for all participants. According to Collins, if the right people are on the bus, it will always end up in the right place because of the leadership capacity of highly functioning members contributing to an efficient team.

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<sup>349</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 85.

<sup>350</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 41-64.



## Advantages of a Team

Dave Ferguson of Christian Community Church is one multi-site pastor that has endorses developing sermons as a teaching team. According to Ferguson, a collective team is able to produce better content, define clearer theology and have much more fun than those composing sermons alone, all in much less time.<sup>351</sup> He attributes much of their success to teamwork, the absence of ego, the ability to adapt and the discipline of the process.<sup>352</sup>

## The Task of Building Teams

Building preaching teams appears to be much more of an art than a science. First of all, it is difficult to build teams of people that are equally engaged with the mission of the team while devoted to the ministry of the local site. Therefore the senior pastor must be good at assembling teams that can work alongside each other while at different campuses. McConnell indicates that Cedar Park Church has its own teaching pastor at each site, and they are cautious and intentional about not isolating the sites. This is done through intentional relationship between the individuals among each location.<sup>353</sup> This enables the site preachers to be able to trust the process as they are beginning to trust the other team members.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 161-164.

<sup>352</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 155-158.

<sup>353</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 205.

<sup>354</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 2002), 195. Patrick Lencioni writes in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, "Unfortunately, the word trust is used and misused—so often that it has lost some of its impact and begins to sound like motherhood and apple pie. That is why it is important to be very specific about what is meant by trust. In the context of building a team, trust is the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. In essence, teammates must get comfortable with one another."



## Qualifications of a Site Pastor

Building successful preaching teams means that teachers must be team players and relationally engaged with one another. McConnell writes: “My honest take is multi-site exposes staff people who are not team builders.”<sup>355</sup>

Geoff Surratt of Seacoast Church, the only church interviewed that features primarily video preaching, looks for the ability to build teams, shepherding, and entrepreneur skills as the most vital skills for their site pastors to have. Since Seacoast site pastors preach only 4-5 times per year, Surratt feels they don’t need to hire site pastors with preaching gifts. Of the four pastors that are part of the teaching team, the main criterion sought is a natural giftedness to communicate. As Surratt says, “You can teach people to sing, but some people naturally have the gift.”<sup>356</sup>

When selecting a site pastor, John Palmieri and the New Life team looks for character before anything else. Secondly, they look for fruitfulness. They need “a proven track record.” Because of this they don’t ordain for the first year. Thirdly, they look for giftedness. These campus pastors will govern the church. “We only want ‘FAST’ people. We look for people who are Faithful, Available, Spirit-led and Teachable. Then we train them by impartation. ‘Watch me and how I do it.’”<sup>357</sup>

Often these site pastors are leaders who have risen through the ministry ranks of the local congregation. Neither Duane Anders<sup>358</sup> of Stillwater nor Eric Bryant of Mosaic Church have a defined process for selecting site pastors to be the live on-site teachers in

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<sup>355</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 39.

<sup>356</sup> Geoff, Surratt, interviewed by author, January 7, 2010.

<sup>357</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.

<sup>358</sup> Duane Anders, interviewed by Author, January 9, 2010.



new campuses. In both churches, the site pastors came out of the congregation and were unpaid leaders at one time. Four of the eight campus pastors of Mosaic came from assimilated church plants that were considered “struggling.”<sup>359</sup>

### The Face with the Place

New Life Church in Chicago is very intentional about selecting their campus pastors, wanting to always offer “a face with a place” at each of its eleven venues. According to John Palmieri, “This person needs to represent the demographic the venue is attempting to reach. For example, in our Latino congregations, the pastor must be much more authoritative because raising male leadership is crucial.”<sup>360</sup>

A campus pastor must teach consistently to be recognized to be the teaching leader. Jerry O’Sullivan of Shelter Rock affirms that the upfront person will always be recognized as the spiritual leader. Videos or rotating teachers will cause people to continue to go to the teaching pastor instead of campus pastor.<sup>361</sup> This is why Cliff Tademan and the staff at Christ the King Church insist that if a site elects to use a video format, the campus pastor must teach at least once every six weeks.<sup>362</sup>

### Establishing a Preaching Calendar

Many multi-site churches keep each site congruent by developing a strategic preaching calendar in advance. Long range planning enables each campus pastor to be well studied, familiar with what direction the church is going, and have enough time to

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<sup>359</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>360</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.

<sup>361</sup> Jerry O’Sullivan, interviewed by author, May 12, 2010.

<sup>362</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010.



execute with excellence. Each ministry leader interviewed had a deliberate process for advance sermon planning that they indicated was working well in their setting. Though some ministries were highly structured and accountable while others allowed more freedom, each church embraced their particular format because it helped them achieve their ministry goals.

Nelson Searcy, the lead pastor of the Journey Church with multiple campuses in and around New York City, suggests incorporating three kinds of series within the annual preaching calendar. 1.) Attraction series where a topic is presented that would be of interest to those outside the church. This may include things like relationships, sex or finances. 2.) Growth series that are designed to take Christians deeper and make them more Christ-like. This may include expositional or theological sermons. 3.) Balance series that can be used to cover issues that are important, but have not been addressed as part of any recent attraction or growth series. This may include issues like baptism, membership or unanswered prayer.<sup>363</sup>

Planning an extensive calendar often invites two common concerns about the leading of the Holy Spirit. The first concern comes from those who may ask, “What if the Holy Spirit is leading a preacher to preach something other than what he has originally planned?” Stephen Rummage responds by saying that he should preach as the Holy Spirit is leading. “The plan is not a master, but a servant.”<sup>364</sup>

The second concern involves the claim that planning does not make room for unction or the leading of the Holy Spirit. Martyn Lloyd Jones addressed this criticism of planning by saying:

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<sup>363</sup> Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Planning a One Year Preaching Calendar* (New York, The Epic Team, 2005).

<sup>364</sup> Stephen Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 25.



The right way to look upon the unction of the Holy Spirit is to think of it as that which comes upon preparation... We all tend to go to extremes, some rely only on their own preparation and look for nothing more; others...tend to despise preparation and trust to the unction, the anointing and the inspiration of the Spirit alone. But there must be no 'either/or' here; it is always 'both/and.' These two things must go together.<sup>365</sup>

The ministry teams of Seacoast Church and Shelter Rock Church plan preaching calendars annually. Geoff Surratt and the team of Seacoast Church create a rough draft of their preaching calendar one year in advance. They then align teachers to the subjects 2-3 months in advance with lead pastor Greg Surratt, teaching between 50%-60% of the time.<sup>366</sup> According to Jerry O'Sullivan, Shelter Rock Church plans out their series for the entire year in an August meeting. Most of these series are focused on a book of the Bible, though they may preach topical sermons from time to time. Following this, outlines of series are put together months ahead of time.<sup>367</sup>

At New Life Church, the preaching calendar is developed more frequently. According to John Palmieri, within the preaching team, a concept team of 6-7 guys work on the preaching calendar by meeting a couple times per month. The calendar is developed with "prophetic pauses." These pauses are two or three week breaks between series where the site pastor can preach what he wants and feels the local site needs.<sup>368</sup>

## Brainstorming

In the *Big Idea*, Dave Ferguson describes the Community Christian Church annual planning meeting. In this once-a-year brainstorming meeting, Ferguson

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<sup>365</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 304-305.

<sup>366</sup> Geoff Surratt, Interview with author, January 7, 2010.

<sup>367</sup> Jerry O'Sullivan, Interviewed by author, May 12, 2010.

<sup>368</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.



encourages any and every idea. These include ideas that people throw out, other churches have used and ideas that come off the cuff. These ideas are not evaluated, just written down on sticky notes and placed on the board: the wider the net, the more ideas that can be discussed.<sup>369</sup>

Ferguson then uses a five step model to take these ideas and develop the calendar from them: 1) prayer 2) considering the calendar and looking at the best times where newcomers may be interested in coming 3) ranking the possibilities and making decisions 4) placing the Big Ideas on the calendar.<sup>370</sup> The long view visioning required to develop a long term preaching calendar will enable teaching team members to begin and end on the same page.

## **The Practice of Developing Consistent, Congruent and Contextualized Sermons**

### **Developing Sermons that are Consistent with the Biblical Text**

Though each individual interviewed was asked how their team ensured that sermons were exegetically sound, very few of the participants could give a process concerning how this is done. The lack of a clear exegetical process may be due to the fact that most of the churches interviewed do not consistently feature what is commonly referred to as expositional preaching.<sup>371</sup> As Alistair Begg says, “True expository preaching has certainly fallen on hard times.”<sup>372</sup> Stillwater Pastor Duane Anders believes that exposition and proclamation in each campus is really about the gifts of the site

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<sup>369</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 97-98.

<sup>370</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 98-100.

<sup>371</sup> See Chapter 2 for a detailed definition and further explanation of expositional preaching.

<sup>372</sup> Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 1999), 10.



pastor. “Consistency (with the text) depends on style of each pastor. We each preach differently. We preach out of our own giftedness.”<sup>373</sup>

### Exegetical Homework

Of the churches that appear to be aggressively incorporating a multi-campus approach, relatively few feature expositional preaching.<sup>374</sup> Some of the multi-site church leaders interviewed did indicate their pulpits will feature expositional preaching, either occasionally or consistently. Bryant indicated that the pastors at Mosaic will often choose a book study for preaching themes, as seen in their recent series through Ezra. But most sermons are “topical and is easy to apply.”<sup>375</sup>

John Palmieri noted that sermons at New Life Church are preached verse by verses, but packaged topically. The pastors at New Life are able to share the exegetical load breaking up the book into paragraphs and divvy it up among the team. At the time of the interview they were going through the book of James in paragraphs.<sup>376</sup>

Many of the ministries have their pastors do the exegetical work independently of the team and share results together. Palmieri indicated that the “outline driver” does the exegetical work, creates an outline two weeks ahead of time, and brings it to the team meeting so each passage is given a couple weeks of lead time before it is preached.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Duane Anders, interviewed by author, January 9, 2010.

<sup>374</sup> Although John Piper’s Bethlehem Baptist, James MacDonald’s Harvest Chapel and Mark Driscoll’s Mars Hill in Seattle each feature expositional preaching, the messages at the extension-sites are video delivered.

<sup>375</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>376</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.

<sup>377</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010. The team meets from 8:30-11:00 to have team prayer, discuss sermon and church related business and spend a half hour on sermon prep.



This is similar to the process at Shelter Rock Church, where a team of expositors do exegetical work individually and bring notes to the weekly staff meeting.<sup>378</sup>

### **Aligning Sermons to be Congruent with each other**

Most of the churches studied and interviewed were able to compose and present congruent messages because in addition to establishing a long term calendar, they are committed to a routine (usually weekly) meeting where they create and share upcoming content. Each church developed these meetings around the vision of the senior pastor, considering the unique structure of their team and the locations of the campus sites.

### **A Disciplined Process**

Site pastors that preach messages that are congruent with one another usually submit themselves to a disciplined planning structure. Ferguson believes this process must first of all be embraced by the senior pastor as a fully engaged member of the process. The primary factor that will cause this to succeed or fail will be directly linked to the senior pastor's involvement and commitment to the discipline of the process.<sup>379</sup> In order for it to be successful, a culture of discipline must be in place so that everything is done to insure that the planning and prep meetings are in place, week after week.<sup>380</sup>

According to Bird, Ligon and Surratt, the pastors from eleven satellites of New Life Community Church, come together to prepare sermons as a team.<sup>381</sup> John Palmieri, one of the site pastors at New Life described in an interview the weekly process used to

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<sup>378</sup> Jerry O'Sullivan, interviewed by author, May 12, 2010.

<sup>379</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 76.

<sup>380</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 96.

<sup>381</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 16.



prepare congruent sermons. Each Monday, they meet to discuss the upcoming weekend message, with Founding Pastor Mark Jobe driving the outline 75% of the time. The outline driver varies from week to week and needs to drive it for all locations and think it through for all campuses, not only the campus that he works at specifically. It is easy to get tunnel vision and think only of a current setting, therefore they are told to “THINK ALL CHURCH, THINK ALL CHURCH, THINK ALL CHURCH!!!”<sup>382</sup>

After the meeting, the outline driver creates an “internet outline” two weeks ahead of time. Then a series of “reply all”’s go around. Pastors insert illustrations, YouTube videos and then one pastor pulls it all together. “This process has brought cohesiveness to the team. It has brought our church together. We have over 4,000 people hearing the same language.”<sup>383</sup>

The discipline of routine preaching meetings keeps the campuses aligned with one other. Stillwater Church in Dayton holds a weekly planning meeting. Duane Anders says that this “model only works when preachers work ahead. The further we work ahead, the more effective we can be.” At the meeting, three initial questions are asked concerning the upcoming sermon: 1.) What is the text? 2.) What is the theme? 3.) Where do we want to drive it?

Although each campus will use the same text and theme, the leadership of Stillwater gives site pastors much freedom concerning message development. According to Lead Pastor Duane Anders, “Beyond the theme, we don’t worry about it (messages being congruent with each other). We all have a similar underlying mission. Messages become congruent when they are infused with our mission statement of

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<sup>382</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.

<sup>383</sup> John Palmieri, interview with author, May 14, 2010.



invite/grow/serve.”<sup>384</sup> Although they give people a lot of freedom, notes are due on Thursdays for the service bulletin. Each person has a role to play in the process and the roles will be different depending on the series. Ideas are sent throughout the week by email. Occasionally, they will pre-preach a message to each other.<sup>385</sup>

McConnell notes that the teaching pastors at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church gather several weeks ahead of time to discuss upcoming services. They will preach from the same passage and will be consistent in the direction of the sermon. However, as community leader Brodie Taphorn indicated, “Even though we have consistency in what we are saying, there is some diversity and some contextualization as to how we say it.”<sup>386</sup>

At Ginghamburg Church, the responsibility for messages to be congruent relies heavily on David Hood, the site pastor at Ginghamburg’s Fort McKinley campus. Although the sermons are not identical, the themes are the same as well as any media pieces used. Critical DNA stays the same, though some illustrations change, as Hood says, “Same principles, different practices.”<sup>387</sup>

Every Wednesday morning an extended outline is due to the worship design meeting. Hood goes over the outline from 9:00-9:30. Hood says that this outline should be “good enough that it could be preached “as-is” in 90% of congregations.”<sup>388</sup> It is in these meetings that he preaches his outline to the rest of the worship design team that includes the worship pastor, media and graphics director, small group coordinator, venue coordinator and the lead pastor. According to Hood, “The worship design meeting is the

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<sup>384</sup> Duane Anders, interviewed by author, January 9, 2010.

<sup>385</sup> At the time of the interview the pastors of Stillwater Church were preaching through a book called *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan. This and other resources were given to the preachers ahead of time to prepare for the planning meetings and sermon content.

<sup>386</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 205.

<sup>387</sup> David Hood, interviewed by author, January 20, 2010. Hood spends at least one third of his time at the main campus to ensure that DNA of the two sites will be consistent.

<sup>388</sup> David Hood, interviewed by author, January 20, 2010.



most difficult and most rewarding part of the process.” Following this, Lead Pastor Mike Slaughter goes through the same process, with his sermon and the same team.

The Ginghamburg campus preachers have between Wednesday and Friday to make revisions before the Friday afternoon run-through meeting. They continually look for opportunities to push people a bit deeper and expect more. Final edits are done on Friday afternoon. According to Hood, “This process makes you work harder. There is a level of accountability. There are so many eyes looking at your sermon before you preach it.”<sup>389</sup>

Jerry O’Sullivan noted that the campus pastors of the Shelter Rock Church gather each Tuesday for the creative team meeting. They begin the meeting by reviewing the previous weekend and planning ahead for the following week. The teaching team works one or two weeks ahead of the preaching date. However, for major services, they may work weeks ahead of time.<sup>390</sup>

According to O’Sullivan, exegetical work is done individually and brought to this meeting. They collaborate around a theme and a text. Sermons are to go in the same direction so there is a similar experience at each campus. The campus pastors are to stick to the text and theme, yet are allowed to “do their own thing”<sup>391</sup>

Other ministries may still meet consistently, yet much less frequently. According to Eric Bryant, Mosaic Church in Los Angeles sees congruency among their multiple campus messages without being bound to the weekly meeting as were most of the other churches interviewed. Lead Pastor Erwin McManus meets with the campus pastors only

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<sup>389</sup> David Hood, interviewed by author, January 20, 2010.

<sup>390</sup> Jerry O’Sullivan, interviewed by author, May 12, 2010.

<sup>391</sup> Jerry O’Sullivan, interviewed by author, May 12, 2010.



once per month. They mainly communicate through email, text, and calls. Sometimes the teams get together, sometimes not.<sup>392</sup>

By not gathering as often, the local site pastors are given a great deal of freedom. According to Bryant, lead pastor Erwin McManus will choose a series, scripture, or topic and send it out to pastors who will talk about it. Each campus will have the same theme and passage, but it is up to the individual pastor to create their own talk.<sup>393</sup>

When they do get together, it makes everyone's sermons much more clear and relevant. Often they will preach a 3-4 week series together. At the time they were preaching a series called *Reality Check*. "This process has really helped us improve as speakers. It helps all of us to get better through our competitive natural instincts. Everyone asks for input. We take the good ideas of each other."<sup>394</sup>

Sermons at Mosaic can also be congruent with one another by having site pastors preach their sermons a week behind what McManus preaches at the main campus. Bryant encourages this practice so that the site pastors will be able to listen to Erwin's talk prior to their preaching the same content.

Finally, site campuses, especially newer sites, can preach through Erwin's previous material. This helps to clarify Mosaic's core values, vision and conviction for both the site pastor and those attending that venue.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>393</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>394</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>395</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.



## A Closer Look at Community Christian Church's Weekly Process<sup>396</sup>

In *The Big Idea*, Dave Ferguson describes the weekly team process of Community Christian Church that results in one Big Idea message that will be taught in at least eight CCC locations.<sup>397</sup> Every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. CST, the teaching team from Community Christian Church begins brainstorming in Chicago. Pastors from Detroit, Boston, Manhattan, and Denver are also included in this meeting via video and teleconferencing.<sup>398</sup> Thirteen weeks out, the best theologians and writers on a team write out short essays that flesh out each series as well as each topic within the series that have been developed from the one-year preaching calendar. These short essays, called the one page *Big Idea Graphs*, include an overall summary of each series, the theological foundation of the big idea, any resources that can be used as well as the basic response that they would like people to have.<sup>399</sup> Once these graphs are distributed to the team, the teaching team is able to read strategically, since they know the themes in advance and can purchase books related to that particular theme.<sup>400</sup>

What is referred to as “*the big meeting*” is held three weeks prior to the preaching of the sermon. This meeting lasts only 105 minutes, yet it involves brainstorming ideas for the message, structuring the content and deciding who will be writing each section of the message. Once it has been established what section each person will write, team members have one week to email their section to the team leader.<sup>401</sup> Two weeks out, the teaching team has composed the first manuscript draft of the sermon called the “1.0.”<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> For a closer look at this weekly process, see pages 102-105.

<sup>397</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 75.

<sup>398</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 67.

<sup>399</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 104.

<sup>400</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 108.

<sup>401</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 111.

<sup>402</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 112.



This allows the teaching team to revise content, edit and think about the sermon for two weeks before is preached.

### On Their Own

However, not all multi-site churches have the discipline or even the desire to plan messages that are congruent with each other. Unlike most of the other church leaders who were interviewed, Cliff Tademan and the other site pastors of Christ the King Church plan most of their sermons and themes independently of one another. When questioning if they should prepare sermons together, Tademan and the team members asked: “Is the effort worth the result? Is the value (of congruent sermons) high enough compared to the effort? Is it more work to preach someone else’s messages than it is to create my own?”<sup>403</sup>

Tademan also noted that the site pastors of Christ the King do sometimes help each other by building series and sharing content with the network. Recently, some of the pastors were building a series around the book called *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan. Although they may build a series to present together, site pastors are free to preach whatever they feel led to preach. According to Tademan, “The right way is to let each pastor do their own thing. Different cultures require different messages.”<sup>404</sup>

However, Tademan explained that the mission and vision of the church are able to stay congruent, even if individuals’ sermons are not because they are committed to

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<sup>403</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010.

<sup>404</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010.



“Keeping the main thing the main thing. Who is Christ? What does He want us to do? Love God, Love People.”<sup>405</sup>

### **Contextualization for Local Venues**

Although Biblical passages can be exegeted correctly and sermons composed collectively, a greater challenge may be adapting sermons to the various venues in which they are delivered. Good preachers will exposit both the Biblical text as well as his/her audience. In order for these sermons to be most effective, the local site pastor must be able to contextualize the content.

According to Bird, Ligon and Surratt, “Multi-site churches are transforming their communities by contextualizing their service and outreach to the unique needs of each location.”<sup>406</sup> They note that the Healing Place Church, whose original campus was in Baton Rouge, is one such church that values contextualization. Contextualization happens when they permit freedom within preaching at each campus.<sup>407</sup> This furthers Healing Place’s multi-site model of not only being in more locations, but able to meet needs in more, distant, and unique communities.<sup>408</sup>

### **A Culture of Freedom**

Contextualization of sermons is a value that must be possessed more than a process that can be taught. None of the campuses interviewed nor the literature reviewed

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<sup>405</sup> Cliff Tademan, interviewed by author, January 14, 2010.

<sup>406</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 75.

<sup>407</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 80.

<sup>408</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 76.



offered any formal or intentional training for their preachers to contextualize sermons. Although important, the desire and ability to contextualize a concept appears to be something caught and not taught. It is the responsibility of the local site preacher to make the sermons understandable and applicable to the local audience.

Whereas a disciplined process gives sermons (and series) structure, contextualization arises from giving site pastors freedom. At the Healing Place Church, the teaching team will design the message series together, and the sites will stay as closely synchronized to that series as much as culturally appropriate.<sup>409</sup> Bird, Ligon and Surratt write that all the campuses are on the same page with the lead pastor in terms of content, yet they are free to express that content in ways that best relate to their community. Sometimes these messages are designed so that every campus is preaching on the same topic, other times the site pastors are given themes for an upcoming series and then four or five weeks to preach on these themes. The key is that the site pastor shares the heart, vision and essence of Dino, the lead pastor.<sup>410</sup>

Bird, Ligon and Surratt note that this contextual freedom is also seen at the Decatur, IL based Bridge Church, whose slogan is “one dynamic church, four diverse locations.” The Bridge shares names and doctrinal beliefs, yet allows each campus to determine sermon content or teaching themes.<sup>411</sup> Christ the King’s sites are connected through their partnership values, and not through consistent weekly teaching content,<sup>412</sup> they are able to give their site pastors a large amount of freedom to contextualize

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<sup>409</sup> “Healing Place Church: Multi-Site Without Boundaries” Willow Magazine, Spring 2008 <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN07I22008> (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>410</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 80.

<sup>411</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 140-141.

<sup>412</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 132-133.



messages and preach on the issues and topics that they believe local attendees need and want to hear about.<sup>413</sup>

### An Understandable Message

Contextual freedom can enable site pastors to adapt messages for greater comprehension and specific application. According to Bryant and other Mosaic pastors, 1 Corinthians 14 should remind site pastors that they are to speak in a way that the unbeliever can understand. Bryant and the others see themselves as missionaries in their contexts. They speak through the scriptures by sharing their own lives in order to get people to study the scriptures for themselves. As Bryant says, “My job is not to feed you, but to make you hungry so that you can feed yourself.”<sup>414</sup>

### A Deeper Commitment

The site pastors at Ginghamsburg contextualize their sermons by pressing local audiences for deeper commitment and applying action points to each sermon. David Hood said he always wants to find a way to “tighten the screw of application a bit more. How can I push people a bit further?”<sup>415</sup>

John Palmieri of New Life Church describes the necessity of Biblical theology as well as local contextualization. “Our theology is from above, but our illustrations are unique to the white collar or blue collar communities we are serving.” This philosophy

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<sup>413</sup> “Christ the King Community Church Reaching the ‘Rurban’ Communities for Christ.” Willow Magazine, Spring 2008 <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN09I22008>, (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>414</sup> Eric Bryant, interviewed by author, May 27, 2010.

<sup>415</sup> David Hood, interviewed by author, January 20, 2010. At the meeting the author attended, the site pastor was going to point people in his message to an upcoming marriage retreat.



of contextualization allows New Life to be effective in diverse language, racial, and socio-economic neighborhoods throughout Chicago.

### **Conclusions**

Churches are establishing multiple sites as a way to expand evangelistically and increase ministry effectiveness throughout their regions and around the world. These churches are experiencing significant growth because they can easily launch new sites and establish their ministry or “brand” with greater numeric growth and much less overhead.

The use of video sermons has lowered the cost of adding additional sites and created more opportunities for churches to expand quickly. Video delivered sermons have also enabled churches to hire campus pastors that are able spend time in leadership development and evangelism. The majority of multi-site churches offer video-presented sermons at least some, if not the majority, of the time.

However, many people feel video does not allow and encourage the development of more preachers. Video preaching can cause the video-projected pastor to be seen as just another talking head that parishioners do not have a relationship with. Video preaching seems to be working in many suburban communities. Rural and urban multi-site churches also appear to be open to the multi-site church, as long as a live on-site teacher is preaching.

In light of this, many churches are attempting to become multi-site by establishing local congregations with live, on-site teachers. Multi-site church leaders are finding ways



to offer live preaching at each site that is consistent with the Biblical text, congruent with one another and yet contextualized for each specific venue.

Multi-site pastors can keep their sermons consistent with the text by making a commitment to preaching expositionally and establishing a long term preaching calendar that gives site pastors weeks, if not months, to prepare in advance. This allows the individuals and teams time to do exegetical work both independently and cooperatively.

Multi-site churches can also keep sermons congruent across campuses by establishing a routine (usually weekly) meeting where site pastors gather to develop and share sermon content and outlines. Many churches have found that the creative synergy that comes from preparing sermons collectively not only ensures congruent messages across campuses, but that these messages are actually better due to the group processes.

Though not much is written about contextualizing multi-site sermons, one pattern seems to emerge from the interviews: successful contextualization is the result of the natural gifts of the teaching pastor coupled with the freedom to create, express, and apply sermons at the local venue. The opportunity for local site contextualization must be encouraged by the lead pastor. However, it is the responsibility of site pastors in each instance to present sermons that can be embraced by their local audiences.

### **Supplement: The Community Christian Church Weekly Teaching Team Meeting**

The weekly teaching team meeting has a consistent format that helps ensure consistency and success. This seventy-minute meeting follows the same structure each week because it has been successful and its participants know what to expect.

- Desired outcomes (10 Minutes)



Beginning with the desired outcomes, or with the end in mind, the teaching team starts with asking themselves how they want their people to change after encountering this content by focusing on three aspects:

1. Head: How do we want people to think differently?
2. Heart: How do we want people to feel differently?
3. Hands: How do we want people to act differently?<sup>416</sup>

- Brainstorming (45 minutes)

Since the team has had time to prepare, they gather with stories, illustrations, use Scriptures and ideas to develop in the story. Ideas of team members usually prompt the thinking of other team members. The key is getting as many ideas out as possible.<sup>417</sup>

When Community Christian Church is teaching through an exegetical series, they typically lay out a verse by verse structure that enables the Scripture to speak directly to the hearer.<sup>418</sup> Most of the teaching at Community Christian Church is not expository, and the topical sermons are around six common models.<sup>419</sup>

1. Narratives- Sermons are designed around a three-act play with the problem revealed in act one, intensified in act two and resolved in act three.
2. Problem Solution- Introducing a problem, analyzing it and providing a solution. Another option is offering possible solutions, and concluding the sermon with presenting Jesus as the real solution.
3. Question-Answer- This model is best with helping people apply concepts and make decisions and is structured one of the following ways: 1.) one question with one answer 2.) multiple questions with multiple answers and 3.) one question with multiple wrong answers and one correct answer.

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<sup>416</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 148.

<sup>417</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 149-150. Often, ideas cannot be generated, the teaching team will divide up and debate both sides of an issue, a “hot potato” football will be thrown, with the person receiving the ball forced to come up with the sermon ideas on the spot before throwing it to another, and other outside preachers sermons are read to come up with some ideas.

<sup>418</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 151.

<sup>419</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 151-152.



4. Not this, but that- Similar to the problem solution method, a problem is presented with a series of faulty solutions and finish with the correct solution. It typically follows the pattern of, “it is not this...it is not this...but it is this.”
  5. Ambiguity-Clarity- This model takes a topic (i.e. the problem of suffering, the role of the Holy Spirit) and allows the preacher to state the ambiguity or misunderstanding in scripture and then give the best possible explanation from scripture and experience.
  6. What? So What? Now What? –Similar to the three functional questions developed by Haddon Robinson in *Biblical Preaching*,<sup>420</sup> this model asks three questions about the subject being taught: 1) What are we talking about? 2) What makes it so important that people need to know this? 3) Now what do we want people to do or be as a result of having this information?
- Consensus (10 minutes)

This time is spent making sure that everyone on the team agrees with the content as well as the format of the sermon. This is to ensure that everyone is ready to move forward with the big idea and structure.

- Divvy Time (5 minutes)

The teaching team coordinator then asks the team what part of the sermon each person would like to be responsible to write up and places their name on a Post-it note next to that portion of the outline.

- After the CCC Teaching Team Meeting

Within 24 hours, the teaching coordinator types up the teaching team notes. These notes may include things like stories, websites or books that were suggested to use. This document is no more than one page and includes a designation of what each person is expected to produce. The teachers then email their assigned portions back no later than 17 days before the sermon is to be preached, so each week the sermon content is due by

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<sup>420</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2nd ed.), Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 115ff.



Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. Once the teaching coordinator has the content, he has 24-hours to edit and produce what is called the 1.0, which is the first manuscript for the big idea. Since this arrives 16 days before it is to be preached, there is much time to revise, edit and memorize. It can also be applied to life, marinated in the teachers mind, and revised into 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 manuscripts as additional stories, jokes, or illustrations become available.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 154.



### Multi-Site Leaders Interviewed by Author

<b>Church Name</b>	<b>Original Site</b>	<b>Sites</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Title</b>
Christ the King	Mt. Vernon, WA	17	Cliff Tademan	Campus Pastor,
Seacoast	Mt. Pleasant, SC	13	Geoff Surratt	Pastor of Ministries
Ginghamsburg	Tipp City, OH	2	Mike Slaughter	Lead Pastor
			David Hood	Campus Pastor,
Stillwater UMC	Dayton, OH	3	Duane Anders	Lead Pastor
New Life	Chicago	11	John Palmieri	Campus Pastor,
Mosaic	Los Angeles	8	Eric Bryant	Navigator, Executive Pasto
Shelter Rock	Suburban New York	3	Jerry O'Sullivan	Campus Pastor, Syosset

Figure 1. Multi-Site Leaders Interviewed by Author



## CHAPTER FOUR

### A SEMINAR FOR EQUIPPING SITE PASTORS IN MULTI-SITE CONGREGATIONS TO PREACH LIVE MESSAGES THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE BIBLICAL TEXT, CONGRUENT WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND CONTEXTUALIZED FOR THE LOCAL VENUE

#### Course Format

Chapter Four is written as a course for those ministry leaders that are attempting to investigate, incorporate, or enhance preaching competence in multi-site ministries. It is presented and formatted as a series of lesson plans.

#### Course Syllabus

##### Course Title

Preparing Preachers for Multi-Site Ministry: A Seminar for Teaching Pastors within Multi-Site Congregations

##### Course Outcome

Given a biblical passage and permitted to use all the exegetical and supplemental tools available, teams of participants will be able to prepare messages that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with one another other, and contextualized for the individual teacher's specific ministry setting.

##### Course Objectives

1. Participants will be able to give a Biblical definition of *church* and *local church* as well as describe marks, functions, and leadership structures of a New Testament Church.
2. Participants will be able to summarize the multi-site movement and analyze preaching formats within this movement.
3. Participants will be able to accurately write the big idea of a given passage.
4. Participants will be able to explain the definition of expository *preaching* and be able to list at least 3 benefits of consistent, consecutive expository preaching.
5. With the use of all available resources, the participants will be able to write a clear and accurate big idea of a biblical passage that is consistent with the original author's purpose, genre, and historical/grammatical framework.
6. Participants will be able to compose congruent sermons together through the forum of a teaching team meeting.
7. Participants will be able to create a one year preaching calendar that can be adapted and used for their next year of ministry.
8. Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by analyzing the local audience and showing appropriate relevancy.



## **Course Schedule**

The seminar is designed to last approximately 12 hours and is composed of four sessions, each created to last approximately three hours. Each session can be taught as a stand alone unit as well. The facilitator should schedule the sessions as he/she feels would be the best benefit to the group. However, it is recommended that sessions be taught in order, participants have adequate time to complete assignments between sessions and given enough lead time before each session to complete the recommended reading.

## **Seminar Sessions**

1. A Theological Foundation of *Church*
2. Exposition within Multi-Site Congregations
3. Composing Congruent Sermons
4. Creating a Long-Term Preaching Calendar and Contextualizing Sermons

## **Recommend and Supplemental Reading**

- Bird, Warren; Ligon, Greg and Surratt, Geoff. *The Multi-Site Church Revolution. Being One Church in Many Locations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Ferguson, Dave. *The Big Idea*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

For maximum impact, it is recommended that participants read Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* in its entirety as well as the assigned chapters from the recommended books. For a more extensive list of works pertaining to the nature of the church, multi-site ministries, and expository preaching, consult the bibliography at the end of the cumulative thesis.

## **Activities and Assignments**

In addition to completing the assigned reading, the participants will:

1. Create a sermon that will be composed with a group of other participants.
2. Create a one year preaching calendar that can be adapted for their upcoming year of ministry.

## **Facilitator Preparation**

In order to teach the course successfully, the instructor will need to read extensively before each session. In addition to the content assigned to the participants, the facilitator should read Chapters 2 and 3 as indicated and be competent in Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching*.

The facilitator should read the suggested material prior to each session in addition to what the participant will be asked to read. Beginning in Session 3, participants will begin doing exegetical work as a group. The facilitator must be familiar with whatever passage he/she will lead the group to exegete and compose a sermon from. The pilot group for this project studied James and wrote their sermons on James 1:13-15. The language and genre of James makes it conducive for this type of project. However, the



facilitator will get the maximum impact if it is a text that he/she is familiar with or if the text is being developed for an upcoming sermon or series.

Finally, it is commended that the instructor be familiar with any other passages that participants will interact with in the course of the sessions.

### **A Word of Caution:**

This seminar is not a session in expositional homiletics. It assumes a commitment to and a competent skill in expository preaching. It is not designed to teach how to exegete a text, but how to compose sermons together. It is not designed to teach everything there is to know about preaching, it is designed to equip teams of practitioners to preach consistent messages in alternative venues.

In full disclosure, the content is written with the concern for the state of exposition and the current church. The composer agrees with the statement that “expository preaching has fallen on hard times”<sup>422</sup> and that regardless of the potential of pragmatic growth, that preaching needs to take place locally by an on-site elder. Therefore, the material is based upon a commitment to exposition and many of the activities are designed to reinforce the discipline of exegesis. The facilitator in leading these activities must model individual and team exposition that the instructor desires the team to embrace.

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<sup>422</sup> Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 1999), 10.



**Multi-Site Preaching Seminar**  
**Session 1**  
**A Theological Foundation of Church**

**Course Outcome**

Given a biblical passage and permitted to use all the exegetical and supplemental tools available, teams of participants will be able to prepare messages that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with one another other, and contextualized for the individual teacher's specific ministry setting.

**Session Objective**

Participants will be able to give a Biblical definition of *church* and *local church* as well as describe marks, functions, and leadership structures of a New Testament Church.

**Session Goals**

1. Participants will know each other and the instructor
2. Participants will be able to give a Biblical definition of *church* and *local church* as well as describe what common local church leadership structures.
3. Participants will be able list two marks and three functions of a local church.
4. Participants will be able to list the three common structures of local church government.
5. Participants will be able to describe how Paul viewed the role of local church leadership.

**Recommended Reading**

Bird, Warren; Ligon, Greg and Surratt, Geoff. *The Multi-Site Church Revolution. Being One Church in Many Locations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006. Pages 9-42; Preface and Chapter 1: The Birth of the Multi-Site Movement

**Instructor Preparation**

The instructor should read Chapter 2 of this project addition to the recommended reading. The facilitator should also be familiar with the historical and grammatical background of 1 Corinthians 5:1-12.



## Session 1

### A Theological Foundation of *Church*

#### **Participant Introduction**

Instructor will invite each participant to share name, ministry setting and something unique about themselves that no one else in the class would otherwise know. (1 minute per participant)

#### **Prayer**

Instructor will begin by praying for the class and their time together.

#### **Course Introduction**

Instructor should begin the instruction portion of the class by going over the course outcomes, goals, activities and assignments. This is just a broad view of what will be covered over the four sessions.

#### **Class Introduction**

Instructor will go over the course syllabus outcome, the session outcome and session goals. Instructor must be clear about what participants are expected to learn and accomplish in this session. By the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Give a Biblical definition of *church* and *local church* as well as describe what local church leadership should look like.
2. List two marks and three functions of a local church.
3. List the three common structures of local church government.
4. Describe how Paul viewed his apostolic position and the role of local church leadership.

For many of the participants, this content may be review. However, it would seem wise when studying the multi-site church, that we ensure a ministry is in fact a “church” before it is “multi-site.”

#### **Lesson: A Theological Foundation of *Church***

**Goal:** Participants will be able to give a Biblical definition of *church* and *local church* as well as describe what local church leadership should look like.

**Activity:** Facilitator will lead a discussion of the historical/grammatical definition of a church/local church.

Facilitator will place the word “church” on the board and ask participants to define it. Definitions may include a building, a congregation, the universal people of God, all the religious institutions within a geographic region, the bride of Christ, a place people are dragged to, an institution that must remain separate from the government, etc.

We must look at the word “church” as the Bible did. What did the writer of scripture mean by church?



Instructor will lecture on the Biblical understanding of “church” and “local church” (See Chapter 2, Pages 7-13). It is recommended that instructor have participants look up the mentioned verses before facilitator explains principle. Instructor should make sure that discussion includes the following concepts:

- Church comes from Greek *evkkhlsi,a*, meaning *church, congregation; assembly, gathering (of religious, political, or unofficial groups)*
  - Jesus only used word on two occasions. (Have participants read Matthew 16:18 and 18:15-18)
  - Some believe church means nothing more than “assembly” pointing to Acts 19:32, 39-40
  - Although church originally referred to the “assembly” in Jerusalem, it also referred to the dispersed believers who gathered locally. (See Acts 8-9)
- *evkkhlsi,a* also referred to local assemblies that saw themselves as part of the universal church.
  - Acts 11:26; 13:1 and 14:23

**Goal:** Participants will be able to list two marks and three functions of a local church

**Activity:** Participants will be part of an instructor-led discussion of the marks and functions of a local church (See Chapter 2, p. 11-14). Instructor should stress:

- The New Testament does not provide a formal definition of a “local church.” Therefore a church is to be defined by it’s marks and functions:
- Luther and Calvin both identify the marks of the church as:
  - The faithful preaching of God’s word
  - The administration of the sacraments
- Though there is some slight variation, most theologians identify the following functions of a church:
  - Worship (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19 and Romans 12:1-2)
  - Evangelism (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8, 1 Timothy 2:4) This includes outreach and compassion ministry.
  - Discipleship (Ephesians 4:12, Matthew 28:19-20)
- Instructor poses the questions to the class for short discussions
  - What does a church need to do to be a church?
  - Are all churches actually churches?
  - When does a church, cease to be a church?
  - What about parachurch ministries?

## **Break**

**Goal:** Participants will be able to list the three common structures of local church government.

**Activity:** Participants will participate in a facilitator directed discussion of the three common leadership paradigms in most churches today. (See Chapter 2, Pages 23-25)



- Instructor will list and describe each of the following structures on the board, describe each system, and give an example of each.
  - Hierarchical form- Bishops govern the church, though elders and deacons may be present
  - Federal- Elders that who receive their authority from the congregation govern the church
  - Congregational-government is in the hands of the members themselves
- Stress that the advocates of each system support their system (accurately or inaccurately) from scripture. Many congregations are a blend of systems, but these are fairly typical structures.
- Instructor will ask 2-3 participants to describe their local church leadership structure according to one of the three paradigms.

**Goal:** Participants will be able to describe how Paul viewed the role of local church leadership.

**Activity 1:** Participants will work in teams to determine the presence and roles of elders in the New Testament Churches. (See Chapter 2, pages 25-38)

- The facilitator should communicate that the concept of elder leadership was modeled after the Jewish system of civic and synagogue leadership.
- The facilitator will place the following verses on the board and ask teams of participants to look at up one of the verses (or series) and identify what that verse teaches about local leadership. (Participants will have 10 minutes to do this).
  - 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 11:30; Acts 20:28
  - Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5
  - Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1
- Following this, the facilitator will ask one representative in each group to share what concept of leadership that verse selected teaches.
  - 1 Timothy 5:17- Elders were to “direct the affairs of the church” guard truth (Titus 1:9) and supervise financial matters (Acts 11:30) Acts 20:28)
  - Acts 20:17, 28 -Paul appointed elders; Titus 1:5, Timothy was told to appoint elders
  - Acts 14:23, Philippians 1:1. Elder leadership was shared among multiple people
- The instructor must reinforce that in the above verses, it was necessary for elders to be present at the location of the people they were ministering to. This will be developed more in Session 2.

**Activity 2:** Participants will read and discuss how Paul expected a local church to handle a leadership issue.

- The participants will read 1 Corinthians 5:1-12
- Facilitator may ask the following questions:
  - What is happening in this account?
  - How do you think Paul found out?
  - What was his reaction?



- How did he say the church should have dealt with this?
- Where does Paul get his authority to say this?
- The instructor should communicate that Paul wanted the elders to deal with this situation at the local level. However, Paul only became involved when they failed to act as they should have.

### **Session Conclusion**

Instructor will go over the outcomes and goals of the session again to make sure participants mastered the objectives intended and ask any questions.

### **Homework**

In order to prepare for the next session, participant should read:

Bird, Warren; Ligon, Greg and Surratt, Geoff. *The Multi-Site Church Revolution. Being One Church in Many Locations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006. Pages 9-42; Preface and Chapter 1: The Birth of the Multi-Site Movement

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. Chapter 1: The Case for Expository Preaching and Chapter 2: What is the Big Idea? (pages 17-32)

Also participants should read the first chapter of James several times while making observations and notations.

### **Closing Prayer**



**Multi-Site Preaching Seminar**  
**Session 2**  
**Exposition within Multi-Site Congregations**

**Course Outcome**

Given a biblical passage and permitted to use all the exegetical and supplemental tools available, teams of participants will be able to prepare messages that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with one another other, and contextualized for the individual teacher's specific ministry setting.

**Session Objective**

Participants will be able to summarize the multi-site movement, analyze preaching formats within this movement, explain the definition of expository preaching and accurately write the big idea of a given passage.

**Session Goals .**

1. Participants will be able to define *multi-site church*
2. Participants will be able to *list at least 2 advantages and 2 disadvantages of multisite ministry.*
3. Participants will be able to define the three most prominent preaching formats within multi-site churches and an at least one advantage and one disadvantage of each model.
4. Participants will be able to define *media* and argue clearly for or against the use of media as a vehicle for multi-site preaching.
5. Participants will be able to explain the definition of expository *preaching* and be able to list at least 3 benefits of consistent, consecutive expository preaching.
6. With the use of all available resources, the participants will be able to write a clear and accurate big idea of a biblical passage that is consistent with the original author's purpose, genre, and historical/grammatical framework.

**Recommended Reading**

Bird, Warren; Ligon, Greg and Surratt, Geoff. *The Multi-Site Church Revolution. Being One Church in Many Locations.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006. Pages 9-42; Preface and Chapter 1: The Birth of the Multi-Site Movement

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages.* 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. Chapter 1: The Case for Expository Preaching and Chapter 2: What is the Big Idea? (pages 17-32)

**Instructor Preparation**

The instructor should read Chapter 2: pages 29-48 as well as Chapter 3 in addition to the recommended reading. The facilitator should also be familiar with the historical and grammatical background of James 1.

The first two-thirds of the class will be lecture based and the final activity will involve participants being guided through an exercise in exposition. Only the highlights of the teaching points will be listed in the teaching notes. For a detailed treatment of the



content and illustrations/examples of many of the concepts, the facilitator should be read thoroughly Chapter 3.

It also suggested for the instructor to use PowerPoint in order to move through the first sections quickly.



## Session 2

### Exposition within Multi-Site Congregations

#### Prayer

Instructor will begin by praying for the class and their time together.

#### Review

Instructor will review the previous session, call for any questions and orient participants to the upcoming content.

#### Class Introduction

Instructor will go over the course syllabus outcome, the session outcome and session goals. Instructor must be clear about what participants are expected to learn and accomplish in this session. By the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Define *multi-site church*.
2. List at least 2 advantages and 2 disadvantages of multisite ministry.
3. Define the three most prominent preaching formats within multi-site churches and an at least one advantage and one disadvantage of each model.
4. Participants will be able to define *media* and argue clearly for or against the use of media as a vehicle for multi-site preaching.
5. Participants will be able to explain the definition of expository *preaching* and be able to list at least 3 benefits of consistent, consecutive expository preaching.
6. With the use of all available resources, the participants will be able to write a clear and accurate exegetical outline of a biblical passage that is consistent with the original author's purpose, genre, and historical/grammatical framework.

#### Lesson

Goal 1: Participants will be able to define accurately *multi-site church*.

*Activity::* Participants will interact with the following definition given by the facilitator.

"A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations-different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership and board."<sup>423</sup>

Facilitator will write *multi-site church* on the board and ask participants to parse the phrase. How many churches? *One* How many locations? *Multiple*

An over simplistic definition may be, "One church that gathers in more than one place."

Facilitator will give examples of churches operating more than one site from Chapter 3.

Facilitator will then ask participants, to interact with Towns' inclusion of nursing homes, mission Sunday Schools and prisons. Ask participants if those should be

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<sup>423</sup> Warren Bird, Greg Ligon and Geoff Surratt, *A Multi-Site Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 18.



considered extension sites. Are there other possibilities that could be considered extension sites? How could this impact the local church at the participants attend?

**Goal 2** Participants will be able to list at least 2 advantages and 2 disadvantages of multi-site ministry.

*Activity* : Participants will interact with the following lists of strengths and weaknesses for the multi-site ministry.

As indicated in the preparation section, the facilitator should be read thoroughly Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of the following concepts. The following are some of the advantages and challenges of multi-site ministry. The facilitator explains each item and encourage dialog among the participants according to the instructor's discretion.

What are some of the advantages of a church offering multiple sites?

- Stewardship of resources
- Stewardship of personnel
- Churches are able to extend their reach
- Additional sites can be crafted based on the personality of the community
- A climate for diversity
- A trusted brand
- Addition by subtraction: the outward focus causes this model to disinterest self absorbed individuals
- Having your cake and eating it to. The resources of a big church, yet the small community of a small church
- A chance to improve. Each new campus opening should force the current ministry to evaluate what is working and what isn't.

What are some of the challenges of multi-site ministry?

- Limited, Objective evaluation
- Often an absence of local leadership
- One campus can be highlighted over the others.
- It may enable the consumeristic mindset
- It does not fix, but rather magnifies a church's current ministry struggles.

**Goal 3** : Participants will be able to define the three most prominent preaching formats within multi-site churches

*Activity 1*: Participants will interact with the following examples of preaching formats presented by the instructor as well as the advantage/disadvantages of video-based preaching.

Common Multi-site preaching formats

1. One preacher who travels among multiple campuses



2. A live, local on site preacher at each of the campuses.
3. One preacher who preaches at one or more of the campuses, while the remaining sites view a (live or delayed) video of the sermon.

Although many of multi-site churches are a combination of these models, these three are the primary models. The instructor should ask the participants to name some advantages and disadvantages of each. After a time of discussion, the instructor should turn attention to the video delivered model making sure that the following positive and negative factors have been discussed.

- Advantages of Video delivered preaching
  - Easy and inexpensive to reproduce
  - Leverages a prominent and gifted preacher
  - Ensures a consistent message across sites
- Disadvantages of Video delivered preaching
  - Can turn preacher into another talking head
  - May limit the nurture of emerging preachers
  - Seems to only be working primarily in white, suburban, middleclass neighborhoods
  - Hard questions are yet to be answered

Goal 4 : Participants will be able to define *media* and argue clearly for or against the use of media as a vehicle for multi-site preaching.

*Activity 1:* Participants will interact with the following definition of media given by the instructor.

What is Media?

*“Anything that stretches, extends, or amplifies some human capacity.”<sup>424</sup>*

*Activity 2:* Participants will look at Bible passages that may indicate Paul’s view of the role of media as a vehicle for preaching. Based on the previous definition of media and the subsequent passages, teams of 3-4 participants are to speculate on what Paul’s view of video based preaching might be.

- Colossians 4:16
- 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 5:27
- 1 Timothy 4:2
- 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2; 3:9-10; 3:16
- Hebrews 13:7
- Ephesians 6:22

For a detailed analysis of these passages, see Chapter 2, pages 31-39.

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<sup>424</sup> Shane Hipps, *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 32.



*Synthesis:* Paul used the medium of writing to instruct and encourage various congregations. These letters were to be read within a local church and some of these letters were to be exchanged with other congregations. However, the majority of instruction in a local church was to come through the on-site teaching elders who were men selected for their integrity and ability. These men were to teach doctrine, refute error, and model lives of integrity that would be observed and imitated by those within the local congregation; keeping watch souls as those who would be required to give an account to God.

## **Break**

Goal 5: Participants will be able to explain the definition of expository *preaching* and be able to list at least 3 benefits of consistent, consecutive expository preaching.

*Activity 1:* Participants will review briefly the definition of expository preaching.

Facilitator will review Haddon Robinson's definition with participants.

Expository preaching is "*the communication of a biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.*" <sup>425</sup>

The facilitators will then break down the definition and explain each part as such. The facilitator should be very familiar with the concept of *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson.

Expository Preaching is:

- The communication of a biblical concept
  - Derived from and transmitted through a
    - Historical
    - Grammatical
    - Literary study of a passage
  - Which the Holy Spirit applies to the
    - Personality and experience of the preacher
    - (Then through the preacher applies) to the hearer.

*Activity 2:* Participants will review briefly Biblical examples of expository preaching.

Facilitator will discuss Nehemiah 8:8, Luke 24:27 and Acts 8:35.

After the wall is rebuilt in Jerusalem, Ezra is asked to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses before the assembly of men and women who were able to understand.

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<sup>425</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.



After he opened the book of the Law and the people worshipped, “they read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Nehemiah 8:8).<sup>426</sup>

Luke writes that Jesus is on the Emmaus road with His disciples following the resurrection. Jesus reveals to the unaware disciples that He is the messiah by sharing and applying the Old Testament revelations concerning His identity and purpose. “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).<sup>427</sup>

Expository preaching is also evident throughout the book of Acts. The early church featured a format of explaining and applying scripture as seen in the preaching ministry of Phillip and Apollos. After the persecution of Stephen, Phillip is led by the Spirit to an Ethiopian eunuch reading a scroll of Isaiah in a chariot.<sup>428</sup> Phillip and the man read the scripture together. Afterward, Phillip “began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35).<sup>429</sup> Just as Jesus provided interpretation on the Emmaus road, so Phillip explains the Isaiah passage being read to demonstrate to the eunuch that Jesus is the Messiah.<sup>430</sup> The scripture is then understood and applied as the eunuch asks Phillip if he may be baptized.<sup>431</sup>

*Activity 3:* Participants will review briefly the disciplines necessary to be proficient at of expository preaching in a discussion led by the instructor.

The facilitator will share four key principles to proficient exposition.

1. A commitment to the text- The source and authority for any message comes from the text that must be studied from a historical, grammatical, and literary exegesis of the passage.
2. A willingness to labor- Haddon Robinson says that sermons are diamonds to be mined and not flowers to be picked. Exegesis is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.
3. A willingness to be changed: Phillip Brooks describes preaching as “truth poured through personality.” The primary goal of exegesis is to be moved by God rather than creating a moving sermon.
4. An awareness of two worlds; the world of the text and the world of the audience

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<sup>426</sup> Nehemiah 8:8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

<sup>427</sup> Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>428</sup> Acts 8:26-40.

<sup>429</sup> Acts 8:35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

<sup>430</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 163.

<sup>431</sup> Acts 8:36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”



*Activity 4:* Participants will review briefly the benefits of consecutive expository preaching.

Facilitator will share with participants Christopher Ash's seven benefits of consecutive expository preaching<sup>432</sup> and ask them to interact. According to Ash, consecutive expository preaching:

1. Safeguards God's agenda against being hijacked by ours.
2. Makes it harder for us to abuse the Bible by reading it out of context.
3. Dilutes the selectivity of the preacher.
4. Keeps the content of the sermon fresh and surprising.
5. Makes for the variety in the style of the sermon.
6. Models good nourishing Bible reading for the ordinary Christian.
7. Helps the preacher to preach the whole Christ from the whole of scripture.

Goal 6: With the use of all available resources, the participants will be able to write the argument of a biblical passage that is consistent with the original author's purpose, genre, and historical/grammatical framework.

*Activity 1:* Participants will be led in discussion of the assigned passage (suggested passage is James 1:13-15) by the facilitator. Facilitator will ask the following questions.

- What is the setting in the passage? What is taking place historically or politically at the time? Is God doing anything unique in the epoch of history?
- What words in the passage are significant or difficult to understand?
- Are there any unusual grammatical patterns (repetition, question/answer, etc)?
- What is the author's mood of the passage?
- Who was the audience of this message? What was the author trying to get them to do, say, feel, or believe?

*Activity 2:* Facilitator will review the concept big idea of a passage and lead the participants to uncover the big idea of the discussed passage.

What is the Big Idea<sup>433</sup> of the passage?

Subject: What is the writer talking about?

Compliment: What exactly is he saying about what he is talking about?

Once this is crystallized, write Big Idea on board.

This will be the Big Idea of the sermon that we draft in the next session.

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<sup>432</sup> Christopher Ash, *The Priority of Preaching* (London: Proclamation Trust Media, 2009), 107-122.

<sup>433</sup> If participants need remediation concerning the Big Idea, see Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), Chapter 2.



**Session Conclusion**

Instructor will go over the outcomes and goals of the session again to make sure participants mastered the objectives intended and ask any questions.

**Homework**

In order to prepare for the next session, participant should read:

Ferguson, Dave. *The Big Idea*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. Chapter 10: The Big Idea Teaching Team Meeting, 145-164.

**Closing Prayer**



**Multi-Site Preaching Seminar**  
**Session 3**  
**Composing Congruent Sermons**

**Course Outcome**

Given a biblical passage and permitted to use all the exegetical and supplemental tools available, teams of participants will be able to prepare messages that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with one another other, and contextualized for the individual teacher's specific ministry setting.

**Session Outcome**

Participants will be able to compose congruent sermons together through the forum of a teaching team meeting.

**Session Goals**

1. Participant will be able to give a biblical example of elder elders gathering together to explain and clarify doctrine.
2. Participants will be able to describe the advantages of a teaching team meeting.
3. Participants will be able to compose congruent sermons together through the venue of a team teaching meeting.
4. With the use of all available resources, a team of participants will be able to write a clear and accurate exegetical outline of a biblical passage that is consistent with the original author's purpose, genre, and historical/grammatical framework.

**Recommended Reading**

Ferguson, Dave. *The Big Idea*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. Chapter 10: The Big Idea Teaching Team Meeting, 145-164.

**Instructor Preparation**

The instructor should read Chapter 3, including the supplement at the end of the chapter entitled *Christian Community Church's Weekly Teaching Meeting*, pages 102-105.

Chapter 2 supplement, entitled: "A Theological Rationale Concerning the Development of Consistent, Congruent and Contextualized Sermons in Multi-Site Churches." pages 48-56.

The instructor should also be familiar with the content and historical background of Acts 15 and James 1:13-15

Instructor needs to copy and make handouts available for each participant.



### **Session 3**

## **Composing Congruent Sermons**

#### **Prayer**

Instructor will begin by praying for the class and their time together.

#### **Review**

Instructor will review the previous session, call for any questions and orient participants to the upcoming content.

#### **Class Introduction**

Instructor will go over the course syllabus outcome, the session outcome and session goals. Instructor must be clear about what participants are expected to learn and accomplish in this session. By the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Participants will be able to give a biblical example of elders gathering together to explain and clarify doctrine.
2. Participants will be able to describe the advantages of a teaching team meeting.
3. Participants will be able to compose congruent sermons together through the venue of a team teaching meeting.
4. With the use of all available resources, team of participants will be able to write a clear and accurate exegetical outline of a biblical passage that is consistent with the original author's purpose, genre, and historical/grammatical framework.

Goal 1: Participants will be able to give a biblical example of elders gathering together to explain and clarify doctrine.

*Activity:* Participants will be led in a discussion of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:1-35.

The facilitator will explain the setting, the controversy and who the representatives were. (Chapter 2, pages 52-53). The facilitator should make sure that the conversation includes the facts that:

- The church leaders gathered together
- They discussed issue and reached consensus
- They wrote clearly what was decided among the group.
- They believed that the Holy Spirit was directing and guiding them.

Goal 2: Participants will be able to describe the advantages of a teaching team meeting.

*Activity:* Participants will participate in a facilitator-led lecture highlighting the benefits of a weekly teaching team meeting.

Facilitator will discuss that congruent sermons don't just happen. They occur because of disciplined process. It is much work, but those who do it way the reward is worth the labor. The facilitator will lead a discussion of the benefits of preparing sermons as a teaching team. (For more information see Chapter 3, pages 82-104.)

#### **Benefits of Preparing Sermons as a Team**



1. Congruent Sermons
  - a. Each venue can hear the same message through different voices.
  - b. Individual site pastors have ownership in the content
2. Better Sermons
  - a. Better Theology
  - b. Better Creativity
    - i. We often learn by talking out ideas.
    - ii. Rely on the best talents and gifts of others.
    - iii. Bad ideas are stopped before they get to the pulpit
  - c. Deeper and Wider
3. Less Stress
  - a. Because other team members are dependant upon a real deadline, sermon prep must be done much earlier in the week. (Which means a real day off!)
  - b. Team members benefit from the work of others
4. More Fun
  - a. Engaging the text and one another can be a synergistic process.
  - b. The most demanding and rewarding part of the process.
5. Planning can enhance the overall quality of each service.
  - a. It allows all items: media, arts, administration, worship, children and youth to help craft the weekend service

Goal 3: Participants will be able to compose congruent sermons together through the venue of a team teaching meeting.

*Activity 1:* Participants will be led in a discussion of a weekly team meeting process.

Facilitator will explain that the following outline is an example of how a team can gather to compose sermons together. Instructor needs to make handout of the *Teaching Team Take Away* worksheet available for each participant.



## **The Weekly Teaching Team Meeting**

The weekly teaching team meeting has a consistent format that helps ensure consistency and success. This weekly follows the same structure each week because so they can be successful and its participants should know what to expect.

The discussion is led by the “outline driver” who has done the bulk of the exegetical research and is responsible for leading the group in the composition of the sermon.

### **Devotional Time/Desired outcomes**

The outline driver begins by leading the team through a prayerful analysis of the passage. Then the following questions will be asked:

- What was the original author intending to communicate to the original audience?
- What is the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) of the passage?<sup>434</sup>
- How should those hearing this message be impacted?
- How do they want their people to change after encountering this content by focusing on three aspects:
  - Head: How do we want people to think differently?
  - Heart: How do we want people to feel differently?
  - Hands: How do we want people to act differently?<sup>435</sup>

### **Unpacking and Repacking of the Passage**

The majority of the time in the meeting is spent discussing the exegesis of the passage, a truth outline and then creating a skeleton of an outline that will be used by each group member.

### **Consensus**

This time is spent making sure that everyone on the team agrees and is ready to move forward with the big idea and structure.

### **Divvy Time**

The outline driver then asks the team what part of the sermon each person would like to be responsible to write up and places their name on a post it next to that portion of the outline.

### **After the Teaching Team Meeting**

Within 24 hours, the teaching coordinator types up the teaching team notes. These notes may include things like stories, websites or books that were suggested to use. This document is no more than one page and includes a designation of what each person is expected to produce. The teachers then email their assigned portions back no later than the prescribed deadline.

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<sup>434</sup> For a detailed explanation of the Fallen Condition Focus, see Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

<sup>435</sup> Dave Ferguson, *The Big Idea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 148.



## **Break**

*Activity 2:* The participants will work as a teaching team by creating a teaching outline together based on the structure just presented.

The instructor will serve as the outline driver and facilitate a team teaching meeting based on the James 1:13-15 passage by following the format presented.

## **Session Conclusion**

Instructor will go over the outcomes and goals of the session again to make sure participants mastered the objectives intended and ask any questions.

## **Homework**

Participants will write up their portion of the sermon and then email them to the facilitator by prescribed date. The facilitator will then import each team member's info into a master document that will be handed for the following session.

## **Closing Prayer**



## **Teaching Team Meeting Take Away**

What is the passage?

What is the big idea?

Where are we trying to drive it?

**Head:** How do we want listeners to think differently?

**Heart:** How do we want our listeners to feel differently?

**Hands:** What do we need our listeners to do differently?

Who will be responsible for each section?

What is the deadline for all content submitted?

To whom and what email address is my portion to be submitted to.



**Multi-Site Preaching Seminar**  
**Session 4**  
**Creating a Long-Term Preaching Calendar**

**Course Outcome**

Given a biblical passage and permitted to use all the exegetical and supplemental tools available, teams of participants will be able to prepare messages that are consistent with the biblical text, congruent with one another other, and contextualized for the individual teacher's specific ministry setting.

**Session Outcomes**

1. Participants will be able to create a one year preaching calendar that can be adapted and used for their next year of ministry.
2. Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by finding and selecting appropriate supporting material.

**Session Goals**

1. Teams of participants will create a one year preaching calendar that can be adapted and used for their next year of ministry.
2. Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by finding and selecting appropriate supporting material.
3. Participants will be able to describe the importance of understanding their audience.
4. Given a Bible and selected passages in Acts, the participant will be able to identify and explain how Paul's sermons in Acts were adapted for his audience.
5. Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by analyzing the local audience and showing appropriate relevancy.

**Recommended Reading**

Rummage, Stephen Nelson. *Planning Your Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002. Chapter 4: Planning the Expository Series, pages 73-89.

Robinson, Haddon. "Preaching to Everyone in Particular" in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, 115-121. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

**Instructor Preparation**

The instructor should read Chapter 3, pages 86-89 in addition to the recommended reading. The facilitator will also be leading participants in the composition of a preaching calendar. Therefore, the instructor should have in mind Bible passages, sermon series, and topic that he/she wants to develop for the upcoming year.

There are also items that need to be copied and handed out to participants according to the lesson plan.

Participants should have written up their portion of the sermon and then email them to the facilitator by prescribed date. The facilitator will then import each team member's info into a master document that will be handed for the following session.



## Session 4

### Creating a Long-Term Preaching Calendar

#### Prayer

Instructor will begin by praying for the class and their time together.

#### Course Introduction

Instructor should begin the instruction portion of the class by going over the course outcomes, goals, activities and assignments. This is just a broad view of what will be covered after the end of the four sessions.

#### Class Introduction

Instructor will go over the course syllabus outcome, the session outcome and session goals. Instructor must be clear about what participants are expected to learn and accomplish in this session. By the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Teams of participants will create a one year preaching calendar that can be adapted and used for their next year of ministry.
2. Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by finding and selecting appropriate supporting material.
3. Participants will be able to describe the importance of understanding their audience.
4. Given a Bible and selected passages in Acts, the participant will be able to identify and explain how Paul's sermons in Acts were adapted for his audience.
5. Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by analyzing the local audience and showing appropriate relevancy.

Goal 1: Teams of participants will create a one year preaching calendar that can be adapted and used for their next year of ministry.

*Activity 1:* Participants will be led in a discussion by the facilitator on the benefits of developing a preaching calendar. Instructor can use the following outline by lecturing or creating a lower-point presentation.

#### Benefits of developing a preaching calendar

1. Planning allows for a greater leading of the Holy Spirit.

The right way to look upon the unction of the Holy Spirit is to think of it as that which comes upon preparation."<sup>436</sup> "We all tend to go to extremes, some rely only on their own preparation and look for nothing more; others...tend to despise preparation and trust to the unction, the anointing and the inspiration of the Spirit alone. But there must be no 'either/or' here; it is always 'both/and.' These two things must go together."<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 304.

<sup>437</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 305.



2. Planning can ensure a balance in preaching themes, texts and topics.
  - b. If a preacher is not careful, he will always be preaching his passion while neglecting other major subjects, texts and themes.
3. Planning can enhance the quality and congruency of each service.
  - c. It allows all items: media, arts, administration, worship, children and youth to know in advance and add to the worship experience.
  - d. It allows other ministries to be developed, prepared, or promoted for the series.
4. Planning saves time, reduces stress and makes life easier.
5. Planning can focus study and heighten creativity.
 

Preachers can build libraries, gather content and pray specifically far in advance.

*Activity 2:* Participants will be led in a discussion by the facilitator on the theological assumptions of creating a preaching calendar as a team. Instructor can use the following outline by lecturing or creating a power-point presentation.

#### Theological Assumptions of Creating a Preaching Calendar

1. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. If the ultimate source of a sermon is not from scripture, it is not from God.
2. The Holy Spirit can speak as much through discipline and planning as much through spontaneity.
3. The Holy Spirit can speak collectively as well as individually.
4. The Lord is our Master, a calendar is our servant.

Question: What if the Holy Spirit leads me to preach something other than what I have planned?

Answer: Preach what the Holy Spirit is leading you to preach. A calendar is not a master, but a servant.<sup>438</sup>

*Activity 3:* Participants will be led in a discussion by the facilitator on the different types of series that a preaching team may develop. Instructor can use the following outline by lecturing or creating a power-point presentation.

#### Types of Series

Series are defined by Source of Information

1. Book/Passage
  - a. A book of the Bible
  - b. A literary unit of scripture (i.e. Lord's Prayer, Sermon on the Mount)
2. Thematic
  - a. Focuses on a particular issue or doctrine
  - b. A theme with individual units to be preach (Miracles of Jesus, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, Giving)
3. Stand-Alone Sermons

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<sup>438</sup> Stephen Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 25.



- a. High attendance or low attendance days
- b. Ordinances
- c. Prophetic Pauses
- d. Use a genre to balance preaching.

Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas describe three types of series on the calendar.<sup>439</sup> According to Searcy, series can also be defined by the purpose of the series.

1. Attraction Series

A topic that people are very interested in (relationships, sex, finances) that would be appealing to those outside of the church.

2. Growth Series

Sermons designed to take Christians deeper and make them more Christ-like.

3. Balance Series

Issues that are important but have not been addressed or developed as part of attraction or growth series (unanswered prayer, baptism, membership)

*Activity 4:* Participants will be led in a discussion by the facilitator on process for developing a one-year preaching calendar.

*Activity 5:* Facilitator will lead the team in the process of composing a year long preaching calendar.

The facilitator will begin by sharing he/she feels God has been speaking to him/her. Facilitator may discuss items such as:

- a. How has the Lord been speaking to leadership?
- b. What have teachers been reading and learning?
- c. What doctrine or congregational needs have been quickened during times of study and prayer?

The facilitator will then ask the team to participate in a 30 minute brainstorming session.

It is suggested that 5-7 minutes is spent on each of the following questions:

- a. What major units of scripture should be highlighted over this next year? (Outline those units)
- b. What major issues in life are people struggling with?
- c. What topics are creating conversation or will be creating conversation within the church and secular community?
- d. What doctrines and church issues need to be addressed this year?

\*In order to have an effective brainstorming process, instructor must stress that the goal is to get as many ideas on the board as possible. This is not the time to evaluate ideas; it is just time to get them out. Evaluation will destroy the creative process. Also, occasionally a great idea will be birthed from a bad idea.

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<sup>439</sup> Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Planning a One Year Preaching Calendar* (New York, The Epic Team, 2005).



Following this, the facilitator will present a calendar of the upcoming year with the Sundays for each month. (See example). Instructor will then ask the following questions and give participants the opportunity to respond.

- a. What times of the year do we see large numbers of unchurched people?
  - i. Holidays (Christmas, Mother's Day, Easter, New Years)
  - ii. Seasons (Start of School, Easter/Lent, January)
- b. What times of the year are often marked by low attendance?
- c. What dates from the preacher's calendar will influence calendar?

The facilitator will then look at the significant patterns and themes that have emerged. These ideas will be grouped according to preaching series that will include passage and working theme or big idea. These ideas will be ranked accruing to perceived priority.

The calendar is then filled out as the facilitator directs the group.

- a. The facilitator will begin with his primary preaching objectives for the year. (The instructor from the test group used the attached James outline.) These items are placed on the calendar first.
- b. Next the instructor will fill in the rest of the themes and series according to priority and calendar agreement.
- c. A master calendar will be created as a template for the rest of the year.

## **Break**

Goal 5: Participants will be able to apply and contextualize messages by analyzing the local audience and showing appropriate relevancy.

*Activity 1:* Participants will be led in a discussion by the facilitator on the contextualizing application and illustrative content.

Instructor should note that the research in Chapter 3 indicated that most multi-site churches do not have a process for local contextualization. The pastors from these ministries view contextualization as the responsibility of the local site pastors.

Instructor can use the following outline by lecturing or creating a power-point presentation.



How can a site preacher contextualize sermons?

1. Ask the right question:  
The amateur asks: "What should I talk about?"  
The professional asks: "Who am I talking to?"
2. Recognize that all conversation is cross cultural.  
Culture can be identified by many criteria:
  - a. Economic
  - b. Education
  - c. Gender
  - d. National
  - e. Ethnic
  - f. Worldview/Religion
  - g. Age
  - h. Christian Maturity
3. Be intentional about getting into the mind of the listener
  - a. Observe
  - b. Listen
  - c. Imagine those around the table
    - i. Create a grid based on life situation
    - ii. Develop a grid based on Christian maturity
  - d. Imagine yourself in their position
    - i. Would they regard this proposition as true or do they need more information to be convinced?
    - ii. How could this passage (or point) be applied?
    - iii. What difference will it make in their life?
  - e. Read and watch widely
  - f. Public eavesdropping
4. Illustrate Broadly
  - a. As discussed in Session 4, don't pull all illustrations from the same theme in life. Use illustrations that you personally might not identify with, but others in your venue probably would.
5. Don't be afraid to address a specific group
  - a. As indicated earlier, we often learn more by eavesdropping.
  - b. Children's sermons are often designed for the message to be understood by adults.
6. Focus on commonalities
  - a. We all want to be loved, forgiven, needed and significant. We all want to live above those things holding us down.



7. Speak with an appropriate tone
  - a. How does your audience receive information?
  - b. Most audiences don't like being yelled at
8. Meet with a focus group.
  - a. Focus groups are a collection of people that accurately represents the venue in which you will be preaching.
  - b. Sample process: Organize a group of 6-8 individuals that you can ask a number of questions related to the style or topic before you preach to them. You would ask them a number of questions pertaining to the topic you are discussing in order to see the topic from their perspective. Also, you can come prepared with the outline you are planning on preaching in order to keep both the facilitator and participant to stay on task.



## Paul's Sermons in Acts

**Activity 2:** Participants will read through the Paul's sermons in Acts and note the setting, message, and application.

Sermon	Setting/Audience	Message (Big Idea)	Application
13:13-43			
14:6-16			
17:16-34			
20:16-38			
21:27-22:22			
25:13-26:32.			

Paul began by establishing common ground with people culturally, ethnically, or politically and moved toward direct application. Jay Adams states, "there seems to be some indication that at Antioch his target was especially the "God fearers" (not exclusively, of course); in Athens, perhaps the Stoics (he quotes from two of their poets), and in Caesarea, it is almost certain that the target was Agrippa."<sup>440</sup> Paul his message was always "Christ Crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23), yet he contextualized this message in order to connect with his divergent audiences.

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<sup>440</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Studies in Preaching: Audience Adaptations in the Sermons and Speeches of Paul* (USA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976), 64.



*Activity 3:* Participants will be given copies of the composed sermons from Session 3 and asked to identify three ways they could contextualize the content for their specific preaching venue.

Instructor may have to do a few examples with participants in order to get the hang of it. Ask a few participants:

- a. What concept are you trying to prove, explain apply?
- b. Who is your audience?
- c. How can we show that concept in away that this audience could embrace it?

Participants should be given about 20 minutes to complete this and 10 minutes to share their ideas with another participant.

### **Session and Course Conclusion**

Instructor will go over the outcomes and goals of the course again to make sure participants mastered the objectives intended and ask any questions.

### **Closing**

Since this is the final session, the instructor should thank participants for their time and effort over the session.

### **Evaluation**

It is our understanding that experience is not the best teacher, but evaluated experience. Participants should be asked graciously to fill out the survey in order to make upcoming sessions better.

### **Prayer**

Have participants pray for one another as directed by the facilitator



## **Preaching Units-James**

This upcoming year, those who preach in our pulpit will be preaching through the book of James. In order to make our planning time efficient, the lead pastor has already surveyed the book, divided the passage into preaching units and inserted placeholders for working ideas. These ideas will later be refined and clarified.

<b>Text</b>	<b>Series</b>	<b>Working Ideas or Titles</b>
<b>Triumph in the Midst of Trials</b>		
1:1-4		Face trials with joy for they bring maturity
1:5-8		Ask God for wisdom and He will give it.
1:9-11		Considering your circumstances
1:12		The reward for enduring trials
1:13-15 (16?)		The source and end of temptation
1:(16?) 17-18		Why we can trust God in the midst of trials
<b>Listen and Doing</b>		
1:19-21		Before you speak...
1:22-25		Don't just listen...do something
<b>True Religion</b>		
1:26-27		What's a Christian supposed to do?
2:1-13		Don't favor the popular over the poor
2:14-16		Faith is proved by the deeds that follow
<b>"Watch Your Mouth"</b>		
3:1-2		It is hard to control the tongue
3:3-6		It is easy for our tongues to control us
3:7-8		The consequences of our words
3:9-12		Hypocritical tongues
3:13-18	Stand alone	Two kinds of wisdom
<b>Divided Hearts</b>		
4:1-6		The source of our struggles
4:7-10		Submission and exultation
4:11-12		Don't slander or judge one another
4:13-17		Shall we live for today or tomorrow?
5:1-6	Stand alone	A word to the wealthy
5:7-12	Stand alone	How to be patient when suffering
<b>Powerful Prayer</b>		
5:13-15a		Call on the elders
5:15b-16		Righteousness and prayer
5:17-18		Example of Elijah
5:19		When one wanders from the faith



## 2011 Preaching Calendar

### January

2  
9  
16  
23  
30

### February

6  
13  
20  
27

### March

6  
13  
20  
27

### April

3  
10  
17  
24

### May

1  
8  
15  
22  
29

### June

5  
12  
19  
26

### July

3  
10  
17  
24  
31

### August

7  
14  
21  
28

### September

4  
11  
18  
25

### October

2  
9  
16  
23  
30

### November

6  
13  
20  
27

### December

4  
11  
18  
25



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **EVALUATION OF THE SEMINAR EXPERIENCE**

The initial workshop was taught to seven members of the pastoral team of Phillips Temple Church in Dayton, Ohio. The sessions were open to the women's pastor, youth pastor, visitation pastor, media pastor, pastor of prayer, bereavement pastor and a teaching pastor being considered as the potential site pastor for an upcoming satellite campus. Two-hour sessions were scheduled once a week for six consecutive Wednesdays from August 4 through September 8, 2010.

#### **An Overview of the Seminar**

The facilitator was unsure what to expect from the participants since most of the content was written for multi-site practitioners, and the multi-site concept was initially unfamiliar to the majority of the participants. However, each member was eager to improve their exegetical skills and the inductive exegesis within the lessons kept participants engaged despite the lack affinity to much of the multi-site content.

Some of the participants had prior theological training and others simply felt a call to preach. Some of the participants were excited about the possibility of preaching sermons in multi-site venues; while others were just excited to be part of a team that was interacting with the biblical content..

As with any class or workshop, the level of competence that the participants demonstrated at the end of the training was proportional to the experience each brought to



the session with them. Following the final session, an evaluation form was emailed to the participants and later returned to the facilitator after completion.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Seminar**

One reason that the sessions were so effective was the fact that each class had clearly defined goals and objectives. Students knew what they were expected to accomplish and how the time was going to be spent each evening. The detailed handouts not only elaborated on content, but kept the class focused. In a class that will involve much discussion and collaboration, the detailed handouts helped create boundaries and expectations.

Participants overwhelmingly said the best part of the seminar was, as one student put it, “the collaborative exchange of ideas as we discussed the biblical text.” Participants not only enjoyed learning how to exegete passages, but specifically how to do it as a team. One participant commented that the collective approach to sermon development “felt more comfortable because the burden is not just on one particular person. You are able to check back with the team for references and other things.” Another participant wrote: “Given time these teams will be able to speak with one voice to different audiences while still staying true to the scriptures.”

Since students wrote a sermon as team, it forced them to do exegetical work, contribute to the process of a team sermon and watch how the facilitator puts together a sermon himself. Students were excited to submit their work, have it evaluated by the instructor and contribute to the overall product of a completed sermon.



The weakest part of the content involved the topic of contextualizing team sermons for the individual sites. First of all, very little current literature exists on how preaching teams are contextualizing sermons. In fact, when interviewing the ministry practitioners as part of Chapter 3, very few respondents indicated a process for doing so. It is a skill that is better “caught than taught.” Participants in the seminar suggested developing “hypothetical congregations” in which to make application and be directed in “role playing” by using the notes and handouts provided. Another participant wrote that that there should be more time focused on “actual development and the preaching of the sermon content that we exegete to the different audiences at each site are trying to reach.”

### **Modifications**

After teaching the seminar, the content was updated and the session formats were modified to allow more time for participants to process the information. The original seminar was designed for six sessions, each two hours in length that included the included the following:

1. The Case for Multi-Site Ministry. The Case for Expository Preaching.
2. Expository Preaching in Multi-site Churches
3. The Weekly Teaching Team Meeting
4. Contextualizing Sermons for a Specific Venue
5. Developing a Long Term Preaching Calendar
6. Filling in the Message with Supporting Material

However, after the seminar was conducted, it was determined that two-hour sessions were not optimal for the interactive nature of the course. First of all, as with most midweek church activities, many of the participants had difficulty arriving on time. Secondly, especially during the sessions that involved the teaching team meeting (Session



3) and the development of a long term calendar (Session 5), more time was required to complete the process, especially since it was the first time for this type of activity for many.

The theological rationale content was also extensively modified after the course was introduced. The original content viewed ministry patterns within the contemporary multi-site movement similar to the practices of the early church. The attempt was made to demonstrate that the current multi-site movement was neither commanded nor prohibited in scripture and that Paul used media to preach to distant congregations, although he intended the majority of the preaching to be done by the local elders. However, it appeared to some that I was trying to prove the existence of a multi-site church in scripture. Therefore, I revised the content and began with a theological foundation of a biblical ecclesiology and then looked at multi-site patterns in view of these commands, practices and structures.

The format was then revised to incorporate these content changes and give more time for the group activities. The seminar was revised from six sessions of two hour durations to four sessions, each lasting four hours:

1. A Theological Foundation of *Church*
2. Exposition within Multi-Site Congregations
3. Composing Congruent Sermons
4. Creating a Long-Term Preaching Calendar and Contextualizing Sermons

These longer sessions will allow more time to interact with the content as well shorten the time between the first and the last session. The seminar will now work best if offered on four separate days or on two days with a one-hour break between sessions.



## Recommendations

The best way to maximize content is for the facilitator to consult with the lead pastor(s) prior to conducting the seminar. This will not only give the facilitator a better understanding of the competency of the incoming participants, but will enable the instructor to lead participants to design sermons that can be used in the upcoming season of ministry. By meeting with the lead pastor in advance concerning the preaching calendar, the facilitator can more effectively lead the dialog and content in the direction the senior pastor want to teach in the upcoming year, while allowing all group members to know they were part of the creative process that brought it about.

By leading the team through the teaching team process of the upcoming week's sermon, the participants will more likely be engaged. First of all, the planning activities will not simply be simulating a sermon composition, but they will actually be composing this sermon together, thus participating in the desired outcomes. This will not only cause the participants to be engaged, but they will be able to see how efficient the process can be. In addition to that, they may not feel that the time in session is not a waste of time, since their mind is not preoccupied with sermon prep for their upcoming weekend messages. Finally, by scheduling the following week's sermon planning meeting, participants are more likely to take the process seriously and establish a staff routine.

Students in the pilot group were not asked to purchase books or complete the recommended readings. However, in order to maximize the experience, participants should be asked to read Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* and Dave Ferguson's, *Big Idea*. Robinson's book details how to craft a sermon with precise exegesis and



execution while Ferguson describes clearly how a functional preaching team looks when it is operating effectively.

Finally, although the curriculum is based on Haddon Robinson's "Big Idea" approach to sermon development, very little was written or taught about this in these seminars. This is primarily because there is such good existing content already developed by Dr. Robinson and his former students that is currently available to the facilitator. If the facilitator or participants are unfamiliar with the concept of developing expositional sermons, the facilitator should utilize Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* and/or many of the resources also available by past Doctor or Ministry students at the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary Library.



## **Multisite Preaching Workshop Evaluation Survey**

Dear Colleague;

Thank you for participating as part of pilot group to train site pastors how to preach consistent, congruent and contextualized messages. Your thoughtful evaluation will make this curriculum and program much more helpful. Please take a few moments to answer each of the following questions. Thank in advance for your time and honesty.

Jason

1. How has your understanding of multi-site ministry changed as a result of our sessions?
2. What has been the most beneficial part of the sessions for you?
3. What would you change about the sessions or format?
4. Do you feel more or less comfortable preparing sermons as part of a team?  
\_\_\_\_Please explain:
5. Do you feel the content of the workshop was consistent or inconsistent with scripture?
6. Were the handouts helpful? \_\_\_\_ How could they be improved?
7. What content do you feel was missing that should be covered next time?
8. Do you feel these sessions will enhance the preaching ministry of teams who participate in it?
9. Do you feel the sessions will have an impact on your ministry? \_\_\_\_ If so, how?



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